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Christian Courier

A Reformed Weekly, formerly known as *Calvinist Contact*, December 11, 1992/48th year of publication/No.2333

Christmas turns around a preposition

Nick Overduin

Has it ever struck you that Christmas is essentially about the little word "with"? That preposition "with" sums up Christmas because, as the Bible says, Jesus is Emmanuel, "God WITH us."

Every religion in the world, and indeed every person in the world, has some conception of some sort of relationship to God. But consider the prepositions. (I *will oversimplify now for* purposes of comparison.)

God the commander

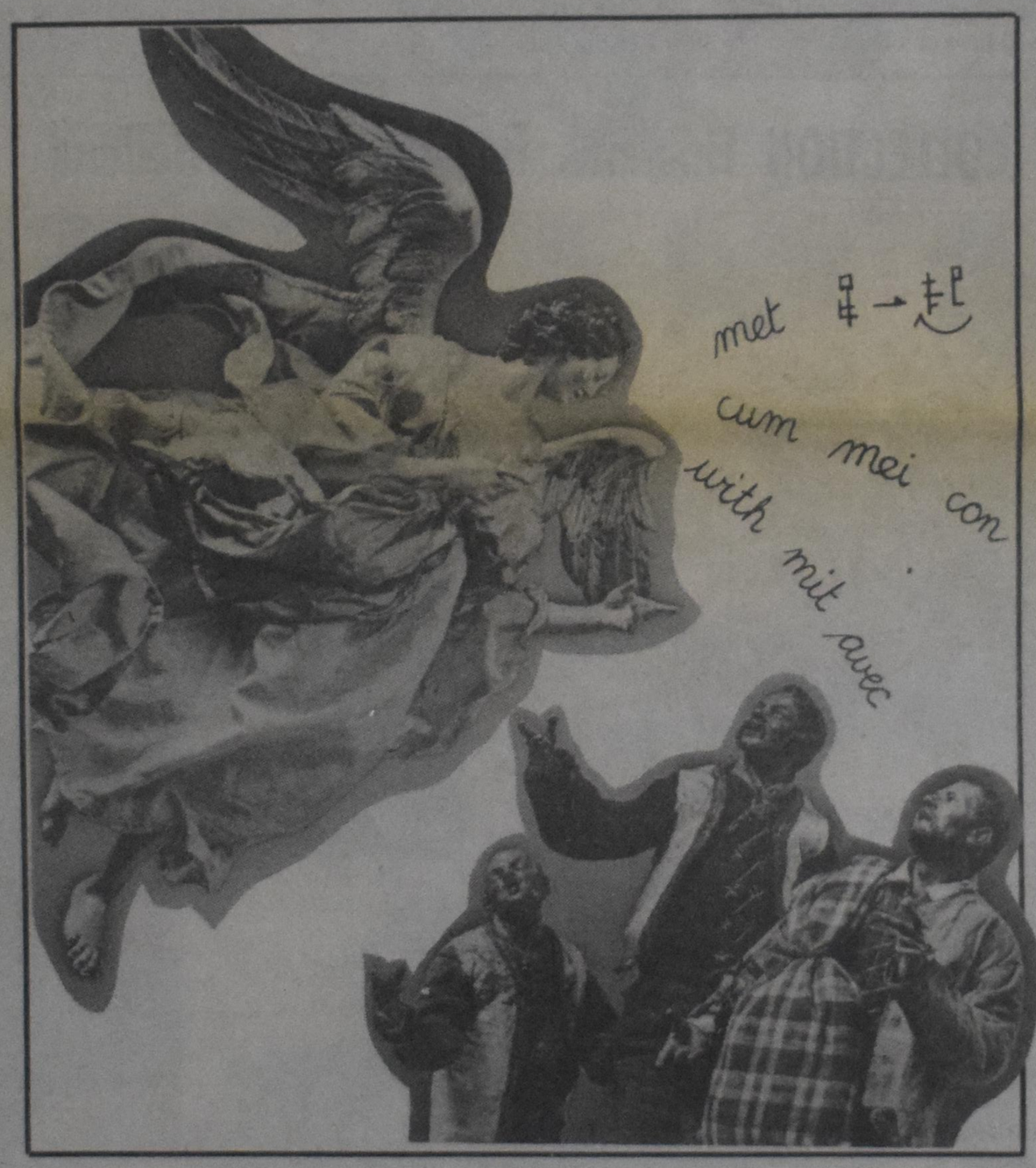
In the Islamic faith the emphasis falls not on God WITH us, but on God ABOVE us. God is the great one, the high and mighty one, the all-powerful Creator.

The relationship between us and Allah is primarily the relationship of the inferior to the superior, slave to boss. We bow down to the ground five times a day. There is no comparison between us and God. We must submit, we must obey, we must serve. Period. God ABOVE us.

If we may use a telephone as an illustration, then the Islamic faith does not believe in a two-way dialogue on the phone with God. The conversation is only one way, from God to us. God gives us, the human race, our orders.

Hence the Islamic faith does not believe in the doctrine of the Incarnation. Muslims respect Jesus as a prophet; they even believe in the virgin birth. But they do not believe that Jesus was really God WITH us. God remains ABOVE us.

In Christianity we certainly acknowledge that God is above us. But "above" is not our major preposition.



God the unknowable

In Buddhism and Hinduism the relationship between God and us is "God BEYOND us." God as complete Otherness exists in the darkness of his own obscurity somewhere on the other side of death. God is fundamentally unknowable; God is the one who cannot be talked about.

According to this conception, the world is a prison for the soul. God is BEYOND us, "out there" somewhere, in a state of nothingness. And in order to be WITH him we must disappear, we must die, we must empty ourselves of everything that makes us who we are. Perhaps through meditation we can reach out to the God BEYOND us.

Whereas Muslims stress

See **CHRISTMAS** --p.9

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The staff at *Christian Courier* wishes you all a blessed Christmas and a peace-filled New Year!

Christmas Issue

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RURAL ROUTES

A bonus for early risers and night owls

Maynard Vander Galien

On most dairy farms, cows calve every month of the year.

On our farm — and on many farms — cows usually calve during the early morning hours. And by early morning hours I mean anywhere from 3:00 to 7:00 a.m.

Some of the largest dairy farms have surveillance cameras in their barns which enable farmers and their families to keep an eye on the animals from the house. Even from their bedrooms, dairy farmers can turn on an observation monitor and see what's going on in the barn. That's very helpful when cows are calving, and saves trips to the barn.

Leaving a warm bed is not for nothing

I'm not that lucky. I make many trips out to the barn to check on expectant cows and heifers. The only nice thing about getting out of a warm bed on a wintry night is the thought of the arrival of a frisky, healthy calf. Or perhaps there'll be a chance to see those magnificent Northern Lights that are so dazzlingly beautiful during some clear, cold nights.

The Northern Lights, or *Aurora Borealis*, were particularly active two winters ago because solar magnetic storms were at their 11-year high point. Sun spots increase at the period known as the solar maximum. The spots are magnetic storms on the sun's surface. They spiral down the magnetic field lines until they hit the earth's atmosphere, causing it to glow.

This summer, and even more so in September, I noticed the Northern Lights during some late-night hours.

Many a winter evening after finishing the barn chores I would stand outside for awhile to watch before heading to the house.

Amazing light show

The entire sky would seem to move in a luminous glory. I'd watch in awe the magic "winter wonderland." There were broad shafts of gleaming white; some were a yellowish colour; some had a rosy glow; even shades of green shot from just above me to the horizon — not only from the north, but from the east to the west as well, with some long silvery beams flashing even to the south.

They quivered and trembled, circled and swirled overhead as I stood nearly freezing, watching that grandiose display in the Ontario and Quebec skies. I trembled too as I watched that awesome display of heavenward electricity. The swirling movements paled away to a misty glow and then blazed again in glorious splendour, as though some distant fan far beyond the dark sky were creating those fiery arches.

Incidentally, this spectacular panorama was only to be seen by us early morning risers and night owls!

Maynard Vander Galien farms in the Ottawa Valley (Renfrew, Ont.) and writes weekly columns for Renfrew County newspapers.

THE REMBRANDT COLLECTION Fine oak furniture from Holland

For more than 60 years I have been selling OAK FURNITURE, first in Holland and since 1951 in Canada. However, the last number of years the low dollar has made it just too expensive. When in Holland this last September, I met with friends who are OAK FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS and saw this beautiful, high quality DUTCH OAK FURNITURE. Once again I decided to make it available in Canada. To keep prices as low as possible we will have an "introduction sale" for six days only at THE HERITAGE INTERIORS warehouse.

Anne de Boer

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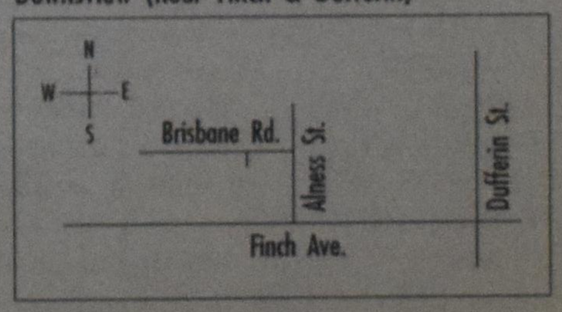

Comment

Pressreview

Carl D. Tuyl

The *Toronto Sun* called our Finance Minister "Maz the Knife," one of the many comments which flowed the land like water from a burst pipe. But PEI will get its fixed link, and the government will throw half-a-billion dollars Eastward to destroy a lot of Maritime landscape with highway construction.

★ ★ ★

Canada was featured in a front-page story in the *New York Times*. It stated that Canadian "socialized medicine," which U.S. insurance companies and some other interest groups want Americans to fear, cost some 28 percent less per capita than the U.S. system which even leaves an estimated 23 million Americans without coverage.

★ ★ ★

Saskatchawan's NDP introduced a zero percent wage increase for government employees. The province's correctional workers promptly walked off the job. There is also *good* news for the province: Sears Canada chose Regina as the site of its new telemarketing centre. The $1.3 million incentive package offered by the provincial government must have helped in choosing that site.

★ ★ ★

A $10 million 55-bed prison for women will be built in Edmonton as part of the $55 million program to bring women prisoners closer to their communities. The Kingston prison for women used to be the only place where federal terms could be served.

★ ★ ★

We have had enough by now of "The Valor and the Horror" brouhaha. Joan Pennefather, chairperson of the National Film Board, fired what I hope will be the last shot in this war. She told the Senate, CBC ombudsman Robert Morgan and CBC president Gerard Veilleux to take a hike, affirming the NFB's support for the film. I did not like some aspects of the film but I sure like a person who doesn't back down for the high and mighty. Three cheers!

★ ★ ★

Australian Governor General Bill Hayden has kangaroo trouble. Ten were set loose in his 53-hectare garden in 1984, but now 120 of them rampage through his flower beds. I suppose he's hopping mad.

★ ★ ★

The United Nations will see to it that relief is delivered to the starving Somalians, if needs be, with military force against the country's warlords and teen-aged thugs. The U.S. will lead the operation. The much maligned Yankees are never missing when relief is needed in the world.

★ ★ ★

Italians are also still suffering from nicotine withdrawal. A month-long strike in the state tobacco monopoly has driven the country into a desperate state. Some Italians were taking guerrilla actions. Judge Osvaldo Bonsangue was strolling down the street in Siracusa, Sicily, when a man ran up to him and grabbed the cigarette from his mouth.

★ ★ ★

It's almost Christmas, folks. Turkey, shopping, the *Nutcracker Suite*, the "Hallelujah Chorus." But also time to get into that book which goes much deeper than Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. It's an old book and it's called the Bible. No Christmas cake, tinsel, sleigh bells or Santa Claus in it.

It is, however, most helpful for your celebrations of the season, for it is filled with gift suggestions. So if you don't know what to give your aunt in Etobicoke or Edmonton, consult the Book. I'm sure you will find the suitable gift in it.

Merry Christmas to you all, and may you find that perfect gift.

Carl Tuyl is a member of the Ontario Provincial Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy and chaplaincy coordinator in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church.

Tuyl speaks to Dutch veterans

STRATFORD, Ont. — It is a little-known fact that in the early 1940s soldiers of Dutch descent arrived in Stratford, Ont., to enrol for training as part of the Allied forces. The Dutch flag flew next to the Union Jack atop the "Juliana Barracks," and on Feb. 14, 1941, Princess Juliana herself visited the city and that detachment of the Free Dutch Army.

The famous Princess Irene Regiment also trained in Stratford. The brigade took part in the liberation of the Netherlands from the Nazis, distinguishing itself in several battles.

Rev. Carl Tuyl, who served in the third battalion of that regiment in Indonesia, recently spoke to his fellow former Dutch soldiers at a memorial service at the cenetaph outside Stratford's St. James Anglican church.

Indonesia
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Hans and Corrie Meiboom are planning another escorted/ all-inclusive trip, via Holland in March '93. The last one was a great success. If you are interested, call for more info.:

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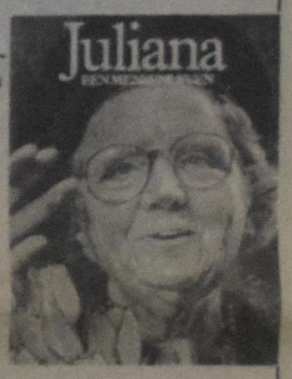

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Editorial

Mazankowski will have a hard time feeding the lean cows

When Joseph, the son of Israel's patriarch Jacob, was Pharaoh's right-hand man, he steered the Egyptian economy through seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. He ordered the farmers to bring one-fifth of the harvest during each of the seven prosperous years to Pharaoh's storage bins in cities designated for that purpose. This food was held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine which followed.

As a result of this prudent action, Egypt was able to weather the seven years of famine without too much difficulty.

When Canada went through its prosperous years, the various governments and ministers did the opposite of what Joseph did. Instead of holding the line on government spending and establishing reserve funds for the possibility that some lean years might be around the corner, they emptied the coffers and allowed the deficit to rise above $30 billion a year.

Two undesirable choices

Now that the lean years are upon us, finance minister Don Mazankowski is in a real bind. He has the option of spending his way out of the recession by creating jobs in order to fight unemployment and restore consumer confidence. But if he takes that route, the deficit increases and the spectre of the collapse of the Canadian economy looms even larger. He can also cut government programs and create even more unemployment and hardship, which means less tax income for the government, higher unemployment and welfare payments, which means a greater deficit as well.

There is no good choice to be made at this time in our history, it seems; just a lesser of two evils. Mazankowski has apparently decided that reducing government spending and jobless benefits is the lesser of these two evils.

Had Canada's governments and ministers followed Joseph's example, we might have been able to pass through this "lean" period with much less pain. The government could responsibly have spent its way out of this recession, the way Joseph distributed the stored up grain to help the Egyptians through a difficult seven years.

Wrong assumptions

One might argue that much of this wisdom comes from 20/20 hindsight. How could anyone have known that a recession was around the corner?

It's not fair to compare our situation to that of Pharaoh and Joseph, either. Joseph or Pharaoh could not take all the credit for their prudence because God had warned Pharaoh in a dream that seven fat years would be followed by seven lean years. It may have been Joseph who told Pharaoh how he could prevent a catastrophe from taking place (the idea of food cities was his idea), but the initiative and sense of urgency had come from God.

Yet we should not take refuge in that kind of argument. One does not need dreams to avoid unexpected downturns of the economy. Whether we knew that bad years were coming or not is immaterial. We should never have assumed that prosperity was forever.

Besides, from the story of Joseph and many other examples of stewardly conduct in history we should have learned that prosperous years are for storing up, not for getting into a hole. We were lacking discipline and sober forethought when we Expoed and Skydomed our way through the 60s and even 80s.

Today we are paying for it. No matter what Mr. Mulroney and his ministers do with the federal budget, a lot of damage to personal and family life has already been done, and more will be done before all of this is over.

BW

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— expresses opinions that are infused by Scripture and Spirit and rooted in a Reformed perspective,
— provides opportunities for contact and discussion for the Christian community.

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No more ribbons for a while, please

A little card and two white ribbons arrived in the mail at home a week ago. The packet was sent by an organization which asks men to wear a white ribbon to show they oppose violence against women. My first inclination was to wear one white ribbon and to pass the other one on to another man. Violence against women is a disturbing problem in the world.

Just a few days ago I read about Pakistani brides being set on fire because their husbands or their husbands' families want larger dowries. The practice of bride burning is widespread in Pakistan and India. In the former Yugoslavia thousands of Muslim women have been captured and impregnated by Serbian men, then held long enough so that an abortion is impossible, and finally released so that they will have to give birth to children who are part Serb. And that's just the tip of the iceberg, the iceberg of treating women as if they were possessions or mere objects.

So I wanted to wear the white ribbon. But something held me back.

I remembered how I had seen another man wearing a shorter white ribbon that represented the fight against pornography. Further reflections made me think of the green ribbons people still wear to keep alive the memory of Kristen French, the abducted, raped and murdered teenager from St. Catharines.

Then there is the blue ribbon that people wear in Ontario to show support for the police in their protest against gun regulations. People in the streets are also asking us to wear red ribbons in support of AIDS victims.

Pretty soon we will be asked to wear a yellow ribbon to hasten the release of Americans taken hostage by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Is there still room on my lapel for the little feet that speak out against abortion?

I decided not to wear the white ribbon after all. Nor will I wear any other ribbon in the foreseeable future. Somehow we need to get to the root of all these problems. Wearing a simple cross on my lapel may be all I want to wear for now.

BW

Letters

Disappointed with Remembrance Day editorial

One of your subscribers showed me the editorial entitled "Why attend Remembrance Day Ceremonies?" (C.C. Nov. 20). As an ex-serviceman he was rather disappointed by this editorial and asked me if I would respond.

I am sure it was not Mr. Witvoet's intention to offend people, and he *does* raise some valid points. True, for most people under the age of 60 war is not a reality. Let us be thankful for that.

But has the editor considered that it may be up to us to tell them? My daughter, a high school teacher in Woodstock, Ont., was in charge of the Remembrance ceremony this year. She suggested to the committee that they ask me to tell students what it was like to live in an occupied country (I went through the Second World War as a boy).

The committee liked the idea and, in the end, I addressed two assemblies in this rather large high school. Even though I am not the greatest orator in the world, students sensed that what I was saying was real. You could have heard a pin drop.

Many students and teachers remarked afterwards that it had been one of the best Remembrance assemblies they had attended.

Make lemonade

Mr. Witvoet suggests that religious depth is missing in the ceremonies. From *our* perspective he is probably right. But surely he knows there is a time and place for everything. You can't include religion in the secular schools, where even the Lord's Prayer has been scrapped because it may offend some people.

I don't agree with that, either. Until the government and Supreme Court show some spine, we have to live with the reality.

In the meantime, if we are given lemons we can make lemonade.

Apology warranted

Finally, I find the remark about members of the Royal Canadian Legion "spending the rest of the day recollecting over beer and other drinks" to be in very poor taste.

There are about 450,000 legion members. In a group that large one may expect to find people whose behaviour offends others. But tarring them all with the same brush is an insult to the men who liberated the country we came from.

If Mr. Witvoet thinks about that for a moment, and if he is the man I think he is, he will probably conclude himself that he owes the R.C.L. and the Canadian veterans an apology.

Robert Anes
Brantford, Ont.

Response:

I will respond only to your last paragraphs. A close reading of what I wrote will reveal that I did not talk about all 450,000 legion members in Canada, only about those taking part in Remembrance Day parades. And nothing that I wrote was intended to take anything away from the gratitude I feel to people who risked their lives to liberate my people from German occupation.

From a friend who frequently goes to Legion Hall gatherings after such a parade I hear that precious few of those in the parade go home afterwards to be with their wives and families. That had also been my observation. Almost all head straight for the Legion Hall, where most of them do what I said they do. And, my friend added, a fair number of them get drunk but, fortunately, make sure they get driven home.

I did not condemn these men. All I said was that the sight of the veterans boarding buses that take them to the Legion Hall is "the saddest part of any Remembrance Day parade."

Why don't veterans who have gone through a tragic participation in a war relive this event, if they must relive it, with wife and children, if they have them, or other significant people? Why must the bonding between young warriors that took place almost 50 years ago be artificially kept alive under "stag" conditions?

Editor

Animal rights people can be frustrating

Being an immigrant who still has close ties with the Netherlands and visits the country on a regular basis, I am well aware of Dutch people's concern about cruelty to animals (The Nov. 20 issue C.C. carried a report on the adoption by the Council of Churches in the Netherlands of a statement on relationship of humans to animals).

I know of some Dutch women who don't dare to wear fur coats anymore, not only because they run the risk of being spray-painted but also because of a feeling of guilt that they own such a coat.

I certainly hate to see animals mistreated. Caged wild animals in zoos already upset me.

At the same time, I find that the attitudes and activities of animal-rights people often amaze and frustrate me. Many of them are the same people who condone and justify the practice of zborting unborn children. This, in my opinion, constitutes the ultimate in cruelty.

Has the Dutch Council of Churches or the World Council of Churches ever come out with a report on the church and the unborn? If they have, I would love to know about it.

Ineke Parlevliet
Niagara Falls, Ont.

In praise of Naarden

It was with interest that I read the article by Rev. Gabe Rienks on Jan Amos Comenius (C.C., Oct. 30). My late husband was born in the city of Naarden in 1906 and we lived there until our immigration to Canada in 1956.

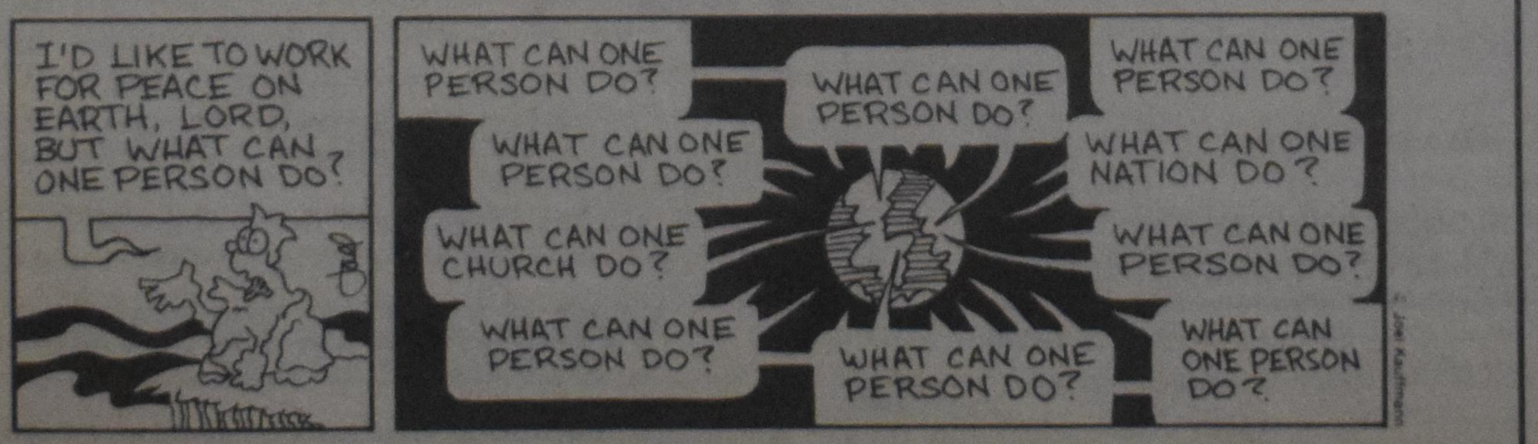
I just want to clarify one thing about the mention of our home town: Jan Amos Comenius was not buried in the *town* of Naarden; he was buried in the *city* of Naarden. Naarden became a city around the year 1300.

Naarden was a very important city in the history of Holland. For years it was the gateway to Amsterdam. It is rich in history and culture, and the citizens of Naarden are very proud of the fact that Jan Amos Comenius is buried there.

For anyone who wants to visit the Netherlands, Naarden would be a very worthwhile stop.

Nell Haagen
Abbotsford, B.C.

Pontius' Puddle


I'D LIKE TO WORK FOR PEACE ON EARTH, LORD, BUT WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?
WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?
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WHAT CAN ONE NATION DO?
WHAT CAN ONE CHURCH DO?
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WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?
Joe Kaufman

Church Marian Van Til, page editor

World Council of Churches funds anti-racism efforts

GENEVA, Switzerland (EP) — The World Council of Churches has announced a total of $205,000 in grants to 21 organizations of racially oppressed groups and to eight anti-racism support groups from its Special Fund to Combat Racism. Money from the fund comes from designated contributions by WCC members, congregations, ecumenical councils, church agencies, anti-racism groups and governments.

The annual grants, the first of which were disbursed in 1970, are given to organizations whose purpose "must not be in conflict with the general purpose of the WCC and its program units, and the grants are to be used for "humanitarian activities."

In past years, about half of all grants went to the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, the two leading movements in the fight against apartheid or separate development in South Africa.

Last year, the WCC announced that the 1991 allocation marked the beginning of a shift of emphasis from groups struggling for the elimination of apartheid. "New emphases are now the struggle of the indigenous peoples for land rights, self-determination and cultural identity, and women in situations of racist oppression" as identified by the WCC.

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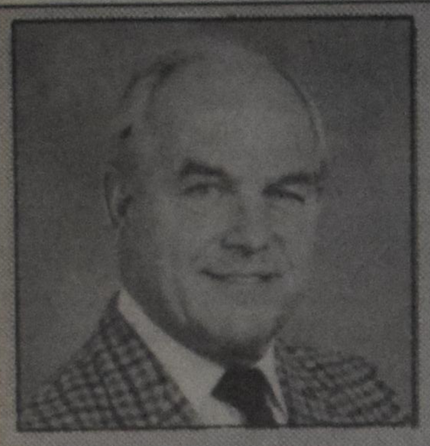

CANADIAN CHURCH SCENE

Jacob Kuntz

Reflections on the referendum debacle

It was to be expected that the church press, too, would react to the defeat of the Charlottetown accord. Several magazines pointed out that the end of the accord is not the end of our problems. On the contrary, the result of the vote presents us with a new challenge to bring healing to this country.

The *Anglican Journal* (which had urged its readers to vote Yes) presented the following editorial in its November '92 issue:

"If we were in any doubt about the divisiveness of a referendum, the events of the past six weeks have reaffirmed the fact. As this paper went to press, Canadians went to the polls. Today we face the debris left behind after the vote.

"Politics make strange bedfellows, but a referendum, we have found, makes even stranger ones.

"The question of whether or not we support the Charlottetown accord has not only pitted natural antagonists against each other, but has even split up those who, in other circumstances, would be natural allies. It has been very much like a political civil war, with family members fighting on both sides.

"Now the people of Canada have spoken and the ball falls back into the government's court.

"One of the great difficulties of a referendum is that it sees things as either black or white. There are no greys, no 'maybes,' no explanations allowed. There are winners — and there are losers.

"In the aftermath of the vote, it is important that polarization and divisiveness come to an end. We need no more 'calls to arms,' no more constitutional warfare. We have no need of recriminations. The die has been cast and the future lies as a blank sheet before us.

"There is only one important thing on our national agenda now, and that is how we treat each other as we go into that future. We must end the polarization and bring about healing in our divided communities, whatever those communities may be.

"Respect and tolerance are virtues that Canadians have held in high esteem. They have never been more needed."

***Christian Week* (Nov. 3) saw the referendum experience as "the most painful exercise in our recent history." We quote:**

"To bring healing to the country, many will need to commit themselves with faith and goodwill to the work of reconciliation.

"A vote such as the one on Oct. 26 is also very difficult for political leaders. All the significant political leaders in the country agreed the accord was the best way of compromising in the interests of the whole. Yet it was rejected. That is troubling. In a host of ways people were saying the accord failed to address their needs. Certainly, they were also showing their distrust of leaders.

"The days ahead will bring opportunities for people of faith to become instruments of healing in this country. No one should think their efforts are too small or inconsequential to be worth the effort. Those who have opportunities to work for justice and responsible self-government for Native people ought to do so. Those who can demonstrate their good will to Quebecers should seize the opportunity. Those who have an opportunity to speak a moderating word when anger or disappointment or self-interest want to take centre stage, should also do so.

"Above all, those with faith in a God of history can be at peace in uncertain times like these.

"We may well be heading into a much more uncertain future, humanly speaking. But Christ's Kingdom stands, and in that we can take strength and be at peace."

***The Catholic New Times* (Nov. 8) showed special concern for the aboriginal peoples and urged Canadians "to make sure that progress in entrenching the rights of native peoples within Canada will not be stopped in its tracks by the electoral failure of the Charlottetown accord." The editorial concluded:**

"Conventional wisdom at the moment insists that Canada's attention must now shift away from constitutional matters and focus on the economy.

"Fair enough — but first things first, even there. Native communities (not all, but many of them) are among the most economically deprived in Canada. Not only are they withered by the experience of several generations on welfare; they have also been hobbled by the continuing erosion of their own potential economic base of natural resources. Provinces and corporations have pushed the exploitation of resources ahead of aboriginal land claims, often without regard to the need of native communities to control the pace of development in their own localities.

"A fresh concentration on the economy could be used as an excuse to ignore the claims of First Nations (and indeed, of small communities generally). Or it could be a post-Charlottetown demonstration of Canada's determination to prosper justly, by beginning with the needs of the poorest, and by refusing to squander precious values and convictions in the pursuit of profit at any social cost.

"Conscientious Canadians should work with First Nations' leaders to help the second possibility unfold."

On referendum day the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (Nov. 6) had, among other things, this to say to Mr. Mulroney:

"The style of leadership you represent seems, to many, to be based on disrespect for people. Instead of valuing the input of every individual, you and your elected members tend to insult the public by treating opposing views as ignorance. You cajole, you manipulate, you confront, you threaten, you create hothouse situations at the eleventh hour, you rely on money — our money — to convince us, and you 'roll the dice.'

"This kind of leadership, of course, is endemic to our whole system. It's even implied in the way we often use the word 'politics' — 'he's playing politics with the people.' But you seem to have perfected this dubious art.

"Mr. Mulroney, there is another style of leadership, and it's a style of leadership that works. It's a style of leadership that gives people dignity. It's a style of leadership that doesn't presuppose that the leader has all the answers. It's a style of leadership that draws respect from the people because the leader identifies with the people, rather than putting himself above them. It's the style of leadership Jesus taught when He said, 'Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant' (Matt. 20: 26). It's called 'servant leadership.' It's been called 'the upside down kingdom.' It's the style of leadership that Jesus' followers learned to practise.

"It is not too late to earn back a little respect from the Canadian people — for yourself and for the political system as a whole. It's one of the things the Canadian electorate is calling for. It's what Jesus taught. And it's the only way to really win."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont.

Cinema summaries

Marian Van Til

Bram Stoker's Dracula

Rated R
Stars Gary Oldman, Wynona Ryder, Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves, Cary Elwes.
Based on the novel by Bram Stoker.
Directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

The legend of Dracula has been around for at least four centuries. Dracula is a vampire, a man dead-but-undead who sucks the blood of victims, on which he thrives in his graceless state. The tale is usually traced to a medieval Transylvanian (Romanian) prince known as Vlad the Impaler. A Crusader, Vlad dealt viciously with his Turkish Muslim enemies, impaling the infidels on sharpened stakes.

In 1897, English novelist Bram Stoker (1847-1914) wrote his own version of the legend. *Dracula* immediately captured the imagination of Victorian England and has since spawned numerous literary offshoots and films. Many of these have increasingly obscured the original tale, turning it into a mere horror story, good for a fright or two.

Metaphysical overtones

But Stoker did not write a horror story. Not unlike Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (which comes from the same period), Stoker's story was a cautionary tale which tried to cope with changing morals, weakening faith, emerging psychology and increasing scientism at the dawn of the Age of Technology.

What's now forgotten is that Count Dracula is cursed to eternal blood-lust and separation from God and humanity because he makes a kind of pact with the devil. A zealous Christian, he goes off to fight the infidels. But some of them trick Elizabeth, his beloved, into believing he's dead. Juliet-like, in deep anguish, she commits suicide.

On his return the count is inconsolable. He becomes enraged when the church tells him his beloved is damned because she took her own life. He renounces God, cursing him and calling down the blood of heaven on himself, determined to be damned with her.

His curse falls back on himself, and he must eternally roam the darkness in torment and isolation, drinking the blood of victims and thereby wooing them to the side of evil. Dracula's victims, incidentally, are women, whom he compels to himself by a strange sexual electricity and who react with passion; men are "infected," in turn, through them. (A "lady" in Victorian England did not have her own passions, sexual or otherwise.)

The only way living human beings are safe from Dracula is through the power of the cross: the mere symbol of the cross deters him, and only a stake through the heart (as he had impaled so many) will finally immobilize him.

It's not hard to understand this story's fascination. It addresses unconscious fears and raises absorbing spiritual, philosophical and psychological questions.

So now we have another filmed *Dracula*. This is at least the ninth one, not counting a couple of comic attempts. Do we need another version?

Director Francis Ford Coppola calls this *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, and while it's closer to Stoker's novel than some, it's really Coppola's story. Perhaps the best part of this 2-hour-15-minute film is the first quarter hour when we learn of Count Dracula's origins. It's downhill from there.

This vampire dies easily

There is some good acting, particularly Anthony Hopkins as the Dutch vampire expert Van Helsing. But there's poor acting too (Cary Elwes and Keanu Reeves). Gary Oldman's Dracula doesn't evoke the sympathy intended and is overcome by make-up and the film's special effects, as is, finally, the whole movie.

It's as if Coppola yearned to film a "classic" Dracula but felt he had to simultaneously placate the jaded palates of young audiences used to the gore and latex ghouls of Stephen King and friends.

Coppola sets up the film for an exploration of Dracula's fall — or rather lunge — from grace, but doesn't follow through. He makes many allusions to the intrusion of science and modern technology — the typewriter and the movie camera have recently been invented; old beliefs come up against new medical technology (including a blood transfusion for one of Dracula's victims) and psychotherapy (another victim is seen to have gone insane but the victim himself realizes he's in the grip his master, the Prince of Darkness).

Coppola attempts to soften Stoker's Dracula, coaxing sympathy for the vampire's torment — he just wants to be loved! This film is such an odd mix of Victorian story and excessive modern visual effects that it's hard to take seriously. Stoker's story is worth revisiting; this film isn't worth a first visit.

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REINDERS

Christmas 1992

Christmas turns around a preposition

... continued from p. 1

obedience to the God ABOVE us, the Eastern religions stress meditation to reach the God BEYOND us.

To return to the telephone imagery, Buddhists would say that God could probably be reached through a long-distance call, but the problem is no one ever knows which number to dial. God is very far away. He is BEYOND us.

As Christians we, too, confess that God is in some ways BEYOND us. But *beyond* is not our major preposition.

God is me

There is another modern option: God INSIDE us; the divine potential WITHIN me; *my self-expression lifted to its highest level.*

The New Age movement is a good example of this idea of God INSIDE us. In this view, my relationship to God becomes my relationship not with a God ABOVE or a God BEYOND, but my relationship with MYSELF.

Christmas gets reduced to Jesus being born within my heart, the Nativity scene as it emerges within my own soul. The resurrection of Jesus gets reduced to the eternal sense of Spring within, the way my spirit keeps rebounding from depression just like the buds come out each April.

My God in me; your God in you. As you can imagine, there is not much difference between viewing God as totally INSIDE you and viewing yourself as totally God. The God INSIDE us idea is ultimately also the conclusion of atheism. There is no God other than MYSELF. My relationship to God is my relationship to MYSELF.

To use the telephone imagery again, there are two phones: the one I talk into, the other I listen into.

As Christians we confess that the Holy Spirit lives within us. But the preposition *inside* is also not our major one.

God a 'near miss'

How about a fourth scenario? God FAIRLY CLOSE to us. This is perhaps the most distressing scenario of all.

Most cults and sects fall into this camp. Some, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, say that Jesus was fully human but not quite fully divine. So God is not really Emmanuel, "God WITH us". He is only ALMOST WITH us.

Other sectarian traditions, taking the opposite stance, say that Jesus was fully divine but not quite fully human. Again, that means God was not really WITH us in Christ. He was BESIDE us; he was IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD; he was DRIVING THROUGH OUR TOWN; but he still didn't stop in to see us.

To use the telephone imagery once more, in this fourth scenario God can be reached, but ONLY by phone. A local call, true; but he must be dialed. He's not here.

Emmanuel distorted

To conclude: it is one thing to use the right preposition, but the crucial thing, of course, is how we live out our understanding in daily life. There are Christians for whom, in spite of what they confess, God is not really Immanuel, not really God WITH us. They say it, but they don't live it.

For example, I have met Christians for whom the full humanity of Jesus is somewhat disturbing. They are uncomfortable when someone says "Jesus must have had hair on his chest and dirt under his fingernails." They feel, "Well, yes, God is WITH us, but he isn't really THAT MUCH with us."

I have met Christians, too, who go overboard on this idea of God INSIDE us. They don't trust any careful work done by sincere biblical scholars because it's all hogwash. All you need is God INSIDE you and you will know the truth.

And I have met Christians who might as well be Buddhists. The only thing they dare to say about God is that God is BEYOND them. They have no certain knowledge of their relationship to him. They don't know whether God loves them. God is out there somewhere in the murky darkness, and they haven't a clue what to say about him. But he is certainly not WITH them through Jesus Christ. He is OUT THERE.

And I have met Christians who might as well be Islamic. The only relationship they have with God is the relationship of submissive obedience. God is above us. "He is God," they say. "I am nothing. I am dirt and ashes."

The greatest truth

If we are going to live as the Christmas message allows us to, then we should focus on relating to God as the God WITH us — not above, beyond, inside, or fairly close to us.

To use the telephone imagery one final time, God WITH us means that for us as Christians there is no need for a telephone at all. Jesus Christ, as one pastor has said, was "God's face-to-face talk with the world."

In Jesus Christ, says the Gospel of John, God "tabernacled" among us. Just as the tabernacle went with the Israelites and was the place where God revealed himself to the Israelites, so in Jesus God "tabernacled" among us.

This literally means that "he pitched his tent among us." He became a real human being, with real body and soul from a real human mother, the Virgin Mary, though without any male participation.

This is the unique comfort of the Christian faith. God WITH us. As the book of Hebrews says, "He learned obedience through the things that he suffered, and was in all things like us his brothers, sin excepted." He was tempted like we are. He knows what we go through.

Certainly God is above us. Certainly God is beyond us. Nor is it wrong to point out that God, through the Holy Spirit, is inside us. But he is never (and this is the most horrifying perversion of the truth) ALMOST with us.

The greatest truth of all is this: God is WITH us. "Emmanuel"! The baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Rev. Nick Overduin is a Christian Reformed chaplain at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ont.

Christmas Day prayer for the world

Bert Witvoet

Lord, on this early Christmas morning, before the sun hints at its return, send an angel choir to Yugoslavia and give to the hunkered down in shell-torn Sarajevo a serenade instead of a grenade. Let messengers of peace sing the good news of great joy that will be to all peoples — to Serbs, Croats and Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Towards mid-day release also to poor Somalia three latter-day kings bearing gifts — the incense of civil order, the myrrh of medicine and the gold of food.

Dispatch this afternoon spirit-wind-filled Simeon to typhoon-battered Bangladesh, for his eyes have seen your salvation; and direct with haste prophetess Anna to the Palestinians in the Diaspora, so they, too, can eagerly look forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Photo: C.C. files

Inhabitants of Vukovar, in the former Yugoslavia, live amid the rubble.

In a cloudless evening sky, place tonight an ancient star above mainland China to replace the red one in Tiannenmen Square. Let the billion and more yellow bearers of your image be overjoyed when they see the star in the east.

And, Lord, if there's any Bethlehem joy left in the garner of history, send at midnight a shepherd boy to your white sons and daughters who walk in the darkness of North America and Europe. Let this unsophisticated lad through the media of the West spread the word concerning what has been told him about this unaborted Child.

Amen

Christmas remembered

Hans Vander Stoep

1944: *Christmas in occupied Holland*

In the bleak last winter of the Second World War our family celebrates Christmas with meager provisions. Mom bakes cookies from sugar beet pulp instead of flour. The coffee we drink is surrogate. Whatever heat we enjoy is generated by burning wood and coal we are able to forage when no one is watching.

The wood often comes from a railroad tie dragged secretly on a moonless night from the railroad dike to the canal that ran alongside it. From there it is floated to the back of our house and hauled into the shed in our back yard.

The railroad bed is also our source of coal. There we sort years of accumulated spillage from the gravel. Dad says that the pickings are getting very slim because this is the fifth winter of the war. Luckily our railroad has been a very busy one as it runs between Rotterdam and the Hague.

Light in the house comes from two sources. The one is an oil lamp which burns linseed oil that Dad himself has crushed in a hand-operated press. The other is a bicycle part set up in a corner of the living room. The adults take turns peddling this, turning the wheel which activates a tiny generator, which, in turn, charges a pre-war motorcycle battery. Wires run from this battery to the ceiling where a bicycle headlight shines down.

In the tiny circle of dim light coming from this bicycle lamp we sing our Christmas carols. What irony to sing of peace on earth in the misery of this last World War II winter!

1947 *Christmas in post-war Holland*

It's Christmas again. There are lots of lights shining in our house. Natural gas is available again. There's enough food, and I no longer have to wear shorts made from Dad's old suit, or walk around with hand-knitted black stockings held up by a small garter. I now have riding britches and argyle knee-socks.

We even have a real Christmas tree with real candles. Before we are allowed to light these candles (and that's only twice during the Christmas season), we have to place a pail of water beside the tree, just in case.

It's Friday, the second day of Christmas. This morning we will attend our third Christmas service in church and in the afternoon we will take part in the Sunday school Christmas program. There were two Christmas services yesterday, and on Sunday there will be two regular church services, of course.

At this afternoon's Sunday school program, we children will get the only Christmas present that is given — a good Christian book. Our regular gift-giving was done on December 5, the day that *Sinterklaas* visited our town.

As we walk into church this afternoon, all the children will carry a candle holder and candle — the candle holder is made of half a potato wrapped in red crepe paper and adorned with a green ribbon.

We will recite Luke 2 and part of Isaiah, passages we have rehearsed for weeks. We'll sing all the familiar Dutch Christmas carols, including *Ere zij God* ("Glory to God").

But after the program comes the best part. That's when all of us kids march into the council room. There will be a woodstove going full blast and a hot pot of chocolate milk steaming on top. One of the teachers looks after this. I know, because I saw her bringing it from her home to the church.

We kids will be sitting in chairs that normally hold the elders and deacons, an austere body known as "consistory." We'll be sitting around a large table covered with green cloth. From the walls the pictures of former pastors will glare down on us.

This will be our big moment. One of our teachers will tell the Christmas story on flannel board and we will get our book.

1954: *Christmas in Canada*

This is our first Christmas in a new country, far from school friends and relatives. We've been here since June.

In the early part of summer I picked cherries. In Holland I'd never seen a cherry tree! In October I managed to get a steady job with a painting contractor. It paid 35 cents an hour! I could not complain. I am only 15 years old — too old to go to school and too young to work.

We are living in a huge stone barn. The owner, Mr. Groenewegen, stores potatoes in part of it. The rest of the barn is divided into apartments. He and his family live in the biggest part. We live downstairs, on the same floor where the potatoes are stored. The parents of Henry De Bolster (now president of Redeemer College) live above us.

We go to church in a community centre. It's nice in church. We sing mostly Dutch Christmas carols and a few English ones. Our American home mission pastor, Rev. Ehlers, preaches in Dutch.

We will celebrate this first Christmas in Canada on a nearby farm. We'll have turkey, which I have never had before, and cranberries. Cranberries? Jam on meat? Who has ever heard of that? Halfway through dinner we will have had three kinds of vegetables, turkey and ham. What luxury! And then Tante Neel will ask us about desert — apple pie and jello. What's jello?

After dinner we (the guys, that is) will go skating on the pond across the road. The girls will do the dishes. No dishwashers yet in immigrant homes. Tonight we'll sing Christmas carols and make it *gezellig* (cosy) with coffee and cake, *een borreltje en een Ritmeester* (a drink and a cigar).

1992: *Christmas today*

This year my wife and I will celebrate Christmas with our children and grandchildren. We will probably have ham with pineapple for dinner. We had turkey at Thanksgiving. The guys will wash those dishes that the dishwasher can't handle. We will visit my father-in-law in Brampton, Ont., and call my mom in Florida.

We no longer hear Dutch spoken in church or anywhere else, although we will no doubt sing "*Ere zij God*" since it is in our church's new *Psalter Hymnal*.

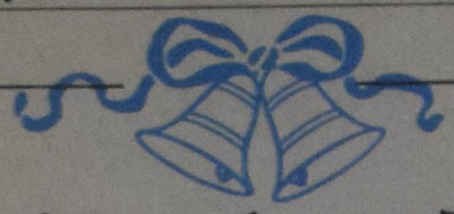
It's been almost 40 years since that first Christmas in Canada, and 50 years since that celebration during the war years. We have become acclimatized and integrated. Yet we continue to be a little different — dare I say "unique"? — in our environment. The community of believers will again celebrate the birth of the Christ child, as will the world in which we are placed.

Every year again we are confronted with this event. May we never become complacent about it, but continue to appreciate the magnificence of this the greatest of Christmas gifts.

The coming of Christ has been the constant in all these Christmases, whether during the war or after, during the immigrant years or after. In all these celebrations what has remained constant is knowing that Christmas precedes Easter, when the debt was paid for us all. It is knowing that God is our help in ages past and our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home.

Hans Vander Stoep is executive director of the Canadian Christian Business Federation. He lives in Burlington, Ont.

Poetry



Christmas Across The Hague

Bells awakened me from sleep:
Christmas descending on The Hague at midnight.
He whom I thought I was now took flight
and came to stand in a lonely deep.

Looking at my life it seemed as though
another had been living it for me.
Standing guard an empty clarity
fills the space before the open window.

The city grew silent. My imagination wings
over the towers back to Bethlehem.
Two thousand years ago a child was born

there — a mother wraps him close and warm
in a cloth: the donkey and the man
stand watching together. An angel sings.

Gerrit Achterberg
translated by Frank Sawyer

Here I Stand

Beside your manger here I stand,
O Jesus Child, who saves me;
the gifts I bring you in my hand
are those that you first gave me.
O take my life, my heart and soul,
and let them stay in your control
through days of joy and sorrow.

Before I was a baby, Lord,
you came for me from heaven.
Before I ever heard your word
you claimed me as your chosen.
Before you made me in the womb
you saved me from my sin and doom;
yet you were born so lowly.

Within the darkness of my sin
the light of Christ is glowing.
O brilliant sunlight, enter in,
your healing power bestowing.
Your light which penetrates the dark
has lit within my heart a spark
of endless joy and glory.

translated by Bert Polman (1990).
Originally *Ich steh an deiner Kribbe hier* by Paul Gerhardt (1656) in 15 stanzas, of which three stanzas are known in Dutch as *Ik kniel aan uwe kribbe neer*, a popular carol.

Soundings

All resonance
All resounding
All resilience
is found
in You.

Your love is
I AM
a clarion call
testing, testing
the tempo of our
fine-tuned tradition,
hot-house habits.

Your I AM
sounds
our baby-Jesus, meek-mild
red-green turkey-stuffed
Christmas.

In the fullness of time,
that is,
when dragon darkness
choked resonance, had us
ear-muffled and mumbling,
sounding was impossible,
a dead thud
in the fog.

In the temple,
Zechariah
numbed by roaring sleep,
Zechariah
dumbfounded until properly tuned,
until the solid promise
growing resonant
in Elizabeth's ageless belly
could be named:
"Beloved."

In the temple,
Simeon, Anna:
parchment-frail bodies
steeled against
muffling death,
steadily laser
Maranatha-chiselled
prayer.

In the temple
Pharisees
mesmerized by habit
mechanically offer
precise knowledge
to seekers
sounding for
Wisdom.

Dragon-darkness,
uneasy with the rustlewhip
of angelwing,
nightsky awash with
unbridled resonance: angelsong
sounding the chaos.
Darkness becomes blind power
unfocused, desperate lashing out,
until women become
numbed grief broken over
limp babies.

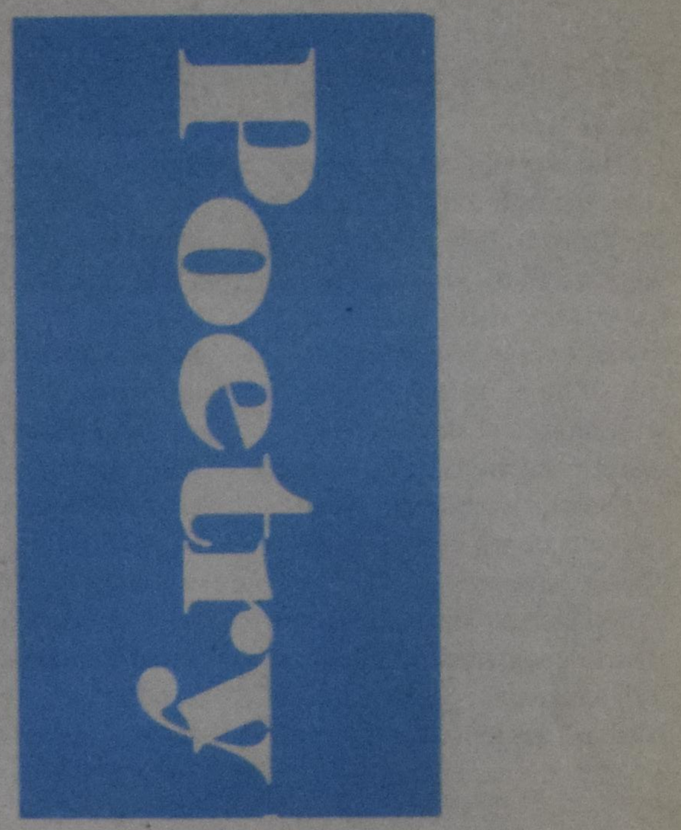
This then:
into the eye of the storm,
two armies poised:
dragon-eye searching.

This then:
in the eye of the storm,
Mary, shepherds
witness to God's resonance:
Christ, crisp with newness
poised on centrepoint,
counterpoint of history:
resounding Word
made flesh.

This then:
the beginning of the sky-
rending, heart-
breaking battle:
my son,
my son.

All-sounding I AM,
dumbfound our darkness.
Lightsome Word,
laser through our mumbling.
Draw us through Christ-
crucible until,
resilient with love,
we may bear
unbearable Light.

Agnes Kramer-Hamstra
London, Ont.



God's Beauty

The snowflake floats towards the ground.
It gently twists and turns around,
So everyone can plainly see
A snowflake couldn't possibly
Fall any way but daintily.

It's quite majestic in design:
The perfect form in every line.
So fragile it will gently lay
Enjoyed until it melts away—
God's beauty, always made this way.

Its parallel, the gift of life:
We often dwell on pain and strife.
If only hate were put to sleep,
And peace were all the world's to keep,
Then love would be for us to reap.

Like snowflakes we could turn around,
And let our love on earth abound.
It was God's plan for us to see
That full of life we all could be
So splendid through eternity!

Donna DeBruyn
Chatham, Ont.

A baby shower in the shed

Jan de Bree

The morning winter air was cold, the light bright. The middle stained-glass window depicted Mary holding the baby Jesus while Joseph, next to her, looked on. On either side of them were windows with images of the wise men and the shepherds. The pictures were simply rendered: clean colours, strong verticals, unadorned drapery.

Yet in their simplicity there was an enchantment that never failed to attract Simon and Josina. This morning they sat,

heads tilted up, staring at the pictures, Simon shaking with excitement as he imaginatively placed himself between Mary and Joseph, and Josina cuddling her stuffed dog, Sunny, mumbling affectionate words as if it were the baby Jesus she held. Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the other stained-glass figures sparkled and shone. Their day had arrived; it was Christmas Day. Today all the words spoken and all the songs sung in the church were about them.

Simon and Josina sat quite still. But they hummed along when familiar Christmas carols were sung and actually sang a few words that they knew. Simon was six, and Josina was four years old. Neither of them could read. They followed the Christmas celebrations by watching Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the others who stood in the tall windows at the front of the church. Simon was fond of the wise men who wore golden crowns while Josina liked the baby Jesus.

***

After the Christmas service when Simon and Josina arrived at home, they were anxious to act out all that they had heard and seen in the church. Unfortunately, they had to wait with their play because their parents served the big Christmas dinner at lunch. Not until after lunch, well into the afternoon, did they have an opportunity to play.

Josina played in her room with her doll, her baby Jesus as she called it, and placed him in a fruit basket for his afternoon nap. Jesus had not slept more than two seconds when she woke him for his bottle of milk. A burp, a diaper change, back into the fruit basket, a two-second sleep, and it was time to wash the sheets and blankets. Again she woke the baby Jesus. While changing the bedding, she held him under her arm. It made the job awkward. If only she could give the baby to Joseph, she thought.

Simon was in his room rummaging through the dress-up box looking for a crown when he heard Josina calling him. She wanted him to be Joseph and hold Jesus while she did the wash. Simon agreed. Playing a wise man by himself was not working out. In Josina's room, Simon, as the older brother and as Joseph, took charge of the action. He said they needed a stable and recommended the garden shed. Josina liked the idea and wondered out loud if Simon could conjure up a cow and a few sheep. Simon said he would think about it for awhile. She suggested that they make them out of cardboard, but Simon discouraged that idea. He needed more time to think.

Josina gathered up her doll, fruit basket and blankets. She followed Simon outside and down the garden path to the shed. Josina placed her basket in the middle of the shed floor. With the shovel, rake, and hoe to her left, bicycles to her right and the lawnmower behind her, she arranged the blankets and tucked in the baby Jesus. Then she rocked the baby in his bed and sang: *'Twas in the moon of winter time, when all the birds had fled, the mighty Gitchi Manitou sent angel choirs instead.*

Simon stood idle while Josie sang. Josie had forgotten about Joseph because she was busy with Jesus.

"Josie, when do I get to do something?" asked Simon.

Josina stopped singing and looked up at Simon. "You can hold Jesus for awhile if you want to. But you can't have him for a long time and you have to give him back to me, Simon."

Simon took the baby Jesus in his arms. He stared into the doll's eyes, muttered several affectionate sounds, then said he was taking Jesus for a walk in the garden.

"No, Simon. That's not fair. It's my doll. You can't have him. Give him back right now," yelled Josina as she grabbed for her doll.

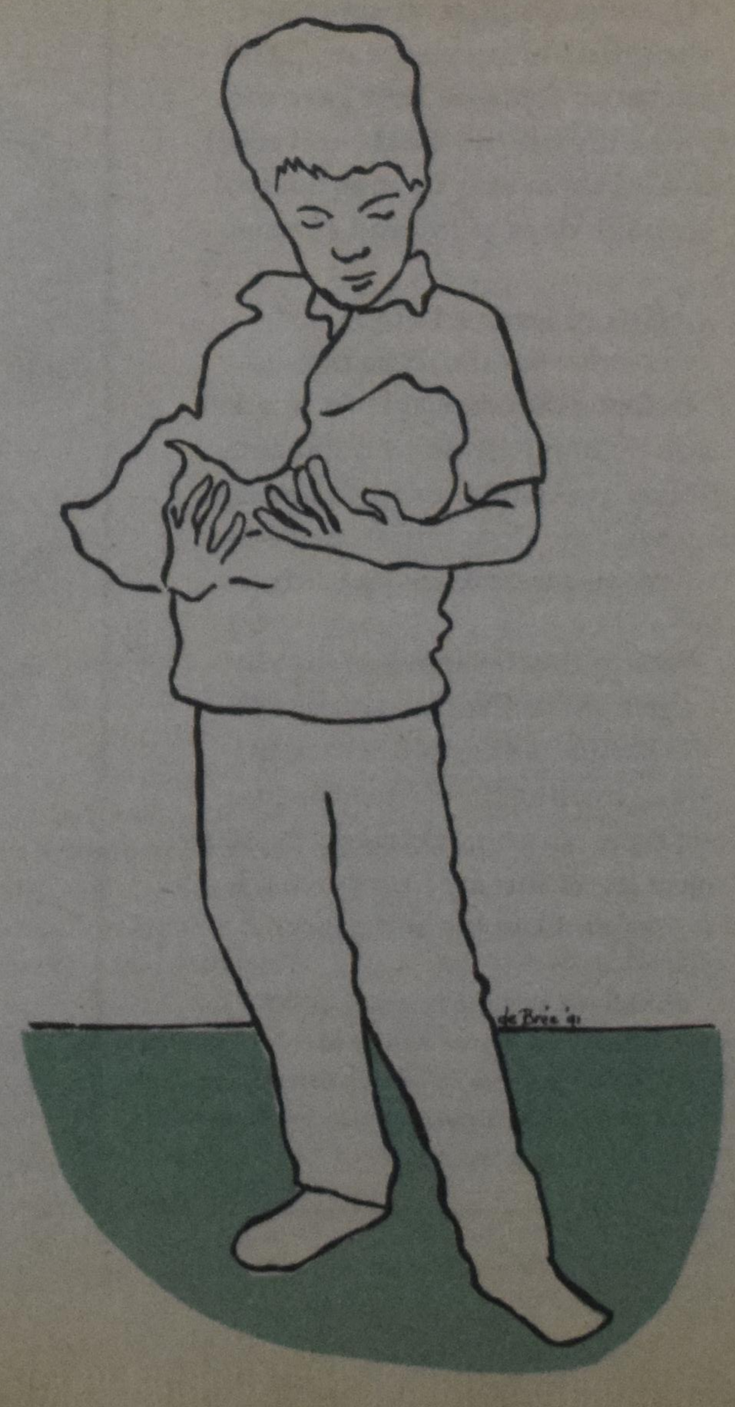
"No, Josie, don't grab! Stop screaming. I just want to give him a little fresh air. I'll give him back. Please, Josie," pleaded Simon who already stood outside the shed with the baby Jesus.

"No! Give him back right now. I'm not listening to you. I'm never listening to you, Simon. Teasy cat," cried Josina.

***

Josina's yelling attracted three neighbouring girls who came running up to the fence: Ranjit Singh, Sheila Brown and Penny Ho. They wanted to know why Josina screamed. When Josina and Simon explained, the girls wanted to join in their play. Simon thought for a moment; then he exclaimed enthusiastically that the girls were the wise men. Ranjit, Sheila and Penny looked at each other, smiled and nodded their heads in agreement. All three climbed the fence.

In the shed Josina put the baby Jesus back into his fruit basket. Outside Simon coached the girls. He explained that he was Joseph, and Josina was Mary. The three girls entered the shed. They stopped before the fruit basket.



"Now you must kneel," said Josina.

"Why?" asked Ranjit.

"Because my baby is a king," said Josina.

"How come your baby is a king?" asked Sheila.

"Because he is. He's the King of the World and everyone must kneel."

"He doesn't look like a king," said Penny.

"I have a doll that is a king and he has a crown and a fancy robe. You just have a plain doll," said Sheila.

"My doll is a king because God said so."

The three girls whispered among themselves. Then Sheila said, "We won't kneel until we see that your doll is really a king." And the three girls walked out of the shed.

"That's not fair!" yelled Josina after the girls. "Joseph is only a carpenter. He can't buy expensive things. And Mary has no money. She stays home and looks after the baby. It's not fair."

"Then they can't be royalty," yelled Penny as she climbed back over the fence.

***

Josina cried. Simon comforted her, "It's okay, Josie. We can still play."

"I'm never going to listen to those girls again. My dolly is king."

She cuddled the doll in her arms. Again she sang, *'Twas in the moon of winter time, when all the birds had fled,* a song her mother had taught her. Simon ran up to the house where he collected three stuffed animals: a horse, a dog and a mouse. When he returned to the shed he placed them around the fruit basket like the animals around Mary and Joseph pictured in the church's stained-glass window. He neighed, barked and squeaked for the baby Jesus. Josina smiled; then she giggled. She handed the baby Jesus to Simon. "Here, you hold him, Joseph." Simon smiled.

They sat quietly around the fruit basket admiring the baby Jesus when outside they heard a rattling at the fence. The girls, thought Josina. Before she could stand up to look, the three girls stood in the shed doorway and shouted, "Surprise!" They came to give Mary a baby shower since she owned neither a crown nor a royal robe for her King Jesus.

Josina looked baffled. She had never heard of a baby shower. She said, "My baby doesn't need a shower. I give him a bath."

The three girls giggled as they approached Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus with three small gifts that they handed to Josina. Then they explained what a baby shower was. Josina laughed at her mistake and joked about baby showers and baby baths and said, "Funny," four times in a row as she opened the presents. The gifts were a small purple robe, a faded gold crown and a silver sceptre. Josina graciously thanked the girls while they in turn wished her a Merry Christmas. Simon saw the potential for more play and suggested that Josina dress up the baby Jesus in his royal robe and gold crown.

"No, Simon. He's only a baby. Wait until he grows up." said Josina as she stood up with the fruit basket in her arms.

***

From the house Josina and Simon's father called them in for supper. Ranjit, Sheila and Penny said goodbye. Mary, Joseph and Jesus ran up the path to the house. The grey winter sky darkened. The air cooled. A slight wind rustled in the tall grass along the road. The towering fir trees looked black in the evening light.

At the back door their father stood silhouetted against the yellow glow of the porch light. The children grinned as they met him.

In the shed the three gifts lay forgotten. The children were in the house for the evening. After supper they would read stories and then go to bed. Today there was no more time to play. The crown and purple robe had to wait for another occasion in the near future, but when a time for the sceptre would come, nobody knew.

Jan de Bree is a writer who lives in Duncan, B.C.

A Christmas miracle

Martha W. Bosma

It's Christmas Eve. Mike and Chrissie are on their way to spend their first Christmas as a married couple, with their respective families back home in Victoria. Mike's been out of college a couple of days already and did most of the last minute packing. Chris left work early today so they beat the heavy ferry line-up and are now waiting in their car on the ferry.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we get some snow today yet," Mike observes, looking at the ominous low-hanging clouds blanketing the seascape into a dark grey. The foghorn sounds eerie in the dense greyness. The mist outside creates an intimate atmosphere inside.

"Do you think our folks will like our presents?" Chris wonders.

"Of course they will," Mike reassures, "especially since they're mostly homemade. Mom told me not to bring any gifts, since I'm still going to school. She probably won't buy any either, she sort of hinted. But knowing my mom.... Our little token gifts will be just fine," he says firmly. "That's not what Christmas is all about anyway."

"I wish my parents felt that way," Chris says softly, snuggling closer into Mike's coat. "I feel so ambivalent about going home. I know Mom's looking forward to our coming, but Dad always gets drunk on special days. He gets mean then and is impossible to be with, like Archie Bunker on a bad day."

Mike puts his arms around Chris and pulls her close. "You're with me now, and we'll be sleeping over at my folks'. We'll visit your family early in the day before your father can get soused. But let's just stop off to say hello and drop off the presents, seeing it's on our way."

"Alright. Mike, did you remember to get batteries for Dad's smoke alarm?" Chris asks absently.

"Yes, Honey, I picked them up this morning and I already put them in. It's just in a paper bag — I hope that's okay. I didn't have time to wrap it properly."

"But Mike, if my father is drunk, we're out of there, okay?" continues Chris, caught up in her own worries and not listening to Mike's.

The cars make their way off the ferry just when the first snow flakes are coming down. Chris perks up. "Looks like we're in for a white Christmas yet," she exclaims. "And its staying, too."

Visibility is poor and Mike strains to see through the windshield clearance as he positions the old Chevy in line with the ferry traffic. It's getting dark early; the snow is coming down steadily now, making for a pretty sight in the light of the street lamps. Chris puts on a Christmas tape and hums along: "Come on, ring those bells; light the Christmas tree: Jesus is our king, born for you and me...." It is warm and cosy in the car, and the music adds to the expectation of going home for Christmas.

"You know what I miss this Christmas, Mike? I miss hearing songs like 'Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer.' Since I've become a Christian I hardly hear those songs anymore," Chrissie says dreamily. "Those are part of my Christmas memories."

"Nothing wrong with those songs," Mike replies. "Just because we don't sing them in church. They're related to the Santa part of the Christmas celebration." Mike pulls into the driveway at Chris' parents' place. "Whose car is that?" he asks.

"It's my uncle's," Chris exclaims. "That means they'll be drinking for sure. Let's turn around quick, before anybody sees us." But it's already too late: her mother is coming out to greet them.

The TV is blaring, and the house is blue with smoke. Chris' father and uncle are watching a hockey game, each nursing a drink.

"Sit down, Mike. Here's a beer for you," Chris' father offers. "How's it going? Got yourself a job yet?" he asks innocently, knowing full well that Mike is still in school. Then his face turns serious. "I say it's about time you got yourself a job, so Chris can stay home and have babies," he needles.

"So much for a happy homecoming," Mike thinks. He tries to get Chris' attention but she's in the kitchen with her mother. Mike leaves to get the presents out of the car. He comes back with them and puts them under the tree.

"Where'd you get money for presents, Mikey — or did your wife buy them for you?" Chris' father yells over the noise of the TV, and he slaps his brother on the knee, trying to draw him into the conspiracy.

"Let's go, Chrissie," Mike urges, trying to control his temper.

"Can't a girl visit her mother? Leave them be." Chris' father taunts.

"Dad, leave Mike alone, will you? We've got to go now. We'll be back tomorrow after church."

"Church comes before parents now, hey?" Chris' father retorts. "I'm surprised you had any money to spare for presents now that you have a church to pay to," he yells after them.

Mike can't get out of there fast enough. "Your old man can sure get ugly," he says. "But I suppose you warned me. I should have listened."

"Dad's been into the Christmas cheer since early this afternoon, Mom told me," Chris explains. "He always gets mean when he's drunk, and loves to pick a fight. At least Mom doesn't get drunk, even if she smokes like a chimney," Chris sighs.

"What a way to celebrate Christmas," Mike says disgustedly. "And to think you grew up in such an atmosphere."

"You know, Mike, I think it seems worse now since I became a Christian. My life has become so much richer...."

"I suspect your dad knows you harbour those feelings towards them and behaves worse towards us for it. We'll just have to keep praying that your folks get to know the Lord too."

"That'll take a giant miracle," Chrissie sighs.

"Isn't God big enough to do that? Look how far you've come: a brand-new Christian who already teaches Sunday school!"

"Yes, and the teacher is probably learning more than the kids," she laughs now

through her tears.
They are both famished and exhausted by the time they arrive at Mike's home. But the warm welcome and the titillating aroma of a roast cooking does much to restore their sagging spirits. Chris' heart softens when she listens to Mike's father asking for a blessing at the dinner table and thanking the Lord for their safe arrival. During dinner, she pushes away the painful thoughts of this afternoon as she tries to concentrate on the conversation. Lots of news to catch up on. Later they sit around the fireplace and Mike's father starts picking his guitar and playing some Christmas melodies. Soon they're humming and singing along with him.

"Dad, can you play a song for Chrissie like 'Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer'?" asks Mike.

"For you, Chrissie, I'll play anything," says Mike's dad, and he gets right into it. Mike's mother serves hot chocolate and ginger cookies. Too soon the evening is over. Tomorrow is Christmas and an early church service.

For Chris the church service is still a novelty. 'Will I ever get the feel of when it's time to stand up or sit down?' she wonders. She enjoys the singing of the Sunday school children up front, all dressed in their festive outfits. She feels a little sad that she can't be with her own class back home. The choir sings beautifully, the organist plays a special Christmas piece and a young girl sings "Silent Night" and moves everybody's heart.

Afterwards they head straight for Chris' home. "Please, God, let it be different at home this time," prays Chris, "and give us a better attitude."

They are the last of the family to arrive. The loud chatter suddenly stops when they enter. All eyes are on them. Chris' father slowly gets up out of his easy chair. There's a catch in his voice when he says, "You probably saved our lives last night, Love."

Mike and Chris are dumbfounded. 'What happened?' Chris wonders. All the animosity has disappeared like snow in the sun.

"I heard this loud buzzing sound last night," her father begins to explain. "I tried ignoring it, thinking it was at the neighbours', but it just didn't stop. I finally got up to investigate and I found the whole living room full of smoke. It turns out the couch had started to smoulder from a cigarette butt. The buzzing was coming from under the tree, from the bag you brought with the smoke alarm inside. If that alarm hadn't been there, with batteries included yet too, I don't know if we'd be here today," he says, unable to go on.

Chris starts to cry then, and her dad blows his nose. Her mom cries too, and there is a lot of hugging. At last Chris dries her tears on her sleeve and says softly, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, God, for this miracle."

Everyone in the room is quiet, sensing that something extraordinary has just happened.

Martha Bosma is a switchboard operator who lives in Victoria, B.C.

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Tilting the balance of power

Wayne Brouwer

Scripture reading: Luke 1:26-55

Do you remember when you first realized that your parents were people, that they were actually human, just like you?

Calvin Miller remembers. He was in Grade 1 at the time. His teacher had some papers to fill out and she asked him, "Calvin, what's your mother's name?"

He said, "Momma."

And she said, "No, that's not her *name*!"

"Yes it is! That's what we all call her!"

"No, Calvin. It's not 'Momma,' it's something else."

"No, it's not!"

"Look, Calvin. 'Momma' is what she *is*, and 'Momma' is what she *does*, but 'Momma' isn't her *name*!"

Young Calvin was mightily disturbed. "You're wrong!" he said, "and when I get home, I'm gonna tell my Momma what you said!" So when he got home from school, he asked, "Momma! Do you have another name besides Momma?"

"Well yes, Calvin, I do," she said. "My name is Ethel."

Calvin was taken aback. At the time he thought it sounded obscene. "Ethel!" It sounded like she should have a twin sister named Regular or Unleaded! But then his mom went on. "I have a middle name, too. It's Faye." And then she told him something absolutely astounding: "And my last name is Miller!"

Little Calvin thought to himself: "Hey! That's my name, too. She's just like me!"

Naming the nameless

Think of it! In that single moment of insight, Calvin Miller's world was turned upside-down. Here was his mother: parent, protector, all-knowing, all-seeing.... He went to bed at night and she was still awake. He got up in the morning and she was already making his breakfast. She could heal all his hurts, make everything he wanted to build and answer all his questions. She was like God to him! And yet, suddenly, she became very human: "She's got the same name that I do."

No name

That's the picture we get in our minds when we read the story of Mary. In her world, there's someone who doesn't have a name. He's the Eternal One. He's the Master of the Universe. He's the Lord of All Creation. Her little human existence owes all it is to him. Every morning she says a prayer to him. Every evening she chants her Jewish thanks to him. But she never mentions his name!

The rabbis say he has a name, but no one must ever speak it. His name is holiness itself. When they read the Scriptures, whenever they come across that four-letter word that identifies him, they skip over it altogether and use the word *Adonai* instead. *Adonai* isn't a name; it's a term that means "He who is lord over me."

But one day Mary has a visitor, a strange and overwhelming visitor. He has a name, too. He is Gabriel, a messenger from the nameless one. His message is this: "Adonai will touch your womb! The nameless one will be born in you! And you are to give him a name like your own: Jesus, son of David."

Suddenly the nameless one has a name. The powerful one becomes powerless — a child, just like her. The eternal one steps into time, into her family, into her tiny world. "Hey, he's just like me! He's got the same name I do!"

Incarnation

Do you understand Mary's song now? *The mighty one has done great things for me!* she sings. And she talks about those who have tried to be god-like through their wealth or military might or encyclopedic wisdom. But they haven't succeeded, she says. And now God has done a new and surprising thing: he took off his robes and his crown, he stepped out of the shadows of eternity, he stripped himself of his authority and he jumped into her womb, into her weakness, into her world. And he took her name.

Photo: C.C. files

The Annunciation, as depicted in a 14th century Eastern Orthodox icon.

Chuck Colson once wrote how the significance of that came home to him. He visited Humaita Prison in Brazil, the home of 350 inmates. Among the awful prisons of the world, this one stands out as a shining example of "success." From nearly every other jail in any culture, about 75 percent of those who are released end up again behind bars. Here, however, that number is four percent.

What's the secret? A couple decades ago, Humaita Prison was taken over by a group of Christians. The first thing they did was to transform the isolation chamber at the heart of the prison. In the past it had been used as a place for solitary confinement: no lights, no furniture, no toilet or washing facilities. Sometimes it was even used as a death chamber: inmates were pushed into it until they crowded each other and suffocated at the bottom.

When Colson toured Humaita they told him there was only one prisoner there now. Would he like to meet the prisoner? His stomach tightened as he agreed. The warden turned the key in the lock and pulled at the heavy iron door. He stepped aside and Colson went in.

There were only three things in that little room: a table with fresh-cut flowers on it, a carved figure on the wall, and a banner strung above it proclaiming, "*Estamos juntos*" ("We are together"). The prisoner in that cell, at the heart of Humaita Prison, was Jesus! And the rest of the inmates understood: he has a name like our names, he shares the struggles we face, he was imprisoned like us and his presence gives us the power to change our lives.

That's the lesson Mary learned the day the nameless one took a name like hers and became a baby in her arms.

Worship in wonder

I remember reading Herman Melville's great story *Moby Dick* years ago when I was in Grade 8. I remember the spiritual struggles in the soul of Captain Ahab. I can still see him standing on the deck of his ship, there on the high seas, raising his eyes and yelling his prayer at heaven: "I know thee, thou clear spirit!"

He beats his fist on his chest and prays, "Come to me as power, and there is something here which to the last gasp of this earthquake life will resist thee!" And then he shudders and sobs. "But come in they lowest form of love, and I will kneel and kiss thee!"

He's caught by the same surprise that Mary felt the day the nameless one took a name in her womb. No wonder she prayed a prayer of wonder at the incredible shifting of the balance of power that God was unleashing in her world.

Wayne Brouwer is a pastor at First Christian Reformed Church in London, Ont.

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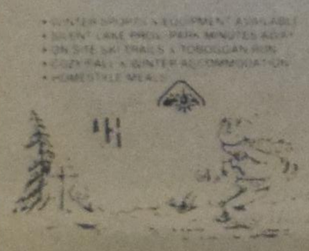

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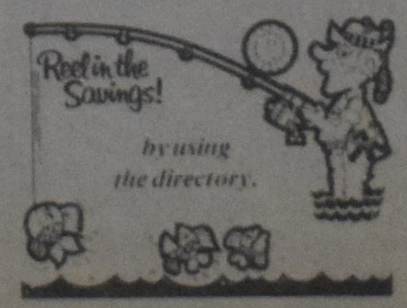

Peter and Marja are IN

Dear P & M:

Your reply to the letter from the Christian Heritage Party (CHP) member contains some erroneous information. Let's give you the straight facts:

1. CHP 's internal strife of the past is long behind us. We are better united than ever an are working hard in preparation for the next election.

2. CHP policies are not strident or right wing to those who seek policies based on unalterable biblical principles.

I feel that your description of many Christians looking "for a less strident more balanced platform which shows love for every neighbour, not just those who believe precisely the way Christians do" contrasts sharply with the biblical view of the Great Commandment: to love God above all and keep his commandments, and then to love one's neighbour as oneself.

CHP policies are not the reason many people don't join us. The cause lies in the lack of commitment by Christians to the "faith as it was once delivered to the saints." This commitment is replaced today by a pragmatism which puts success and compromise ahead of obedience. The tragedy is that a great opportunity for a united voice for truth is rendered less effective than it could be.

What a failure it proves to be time and again if we neglect to base our political involvement on principles rooted in obedience. That is the kind of politics God will bless at his time.

Ed Vanwoudenberg
Executive Director
Christian Heritage Party

Dear P & M:

Your answer to a CHP member in the Oct. 16 C.C. was, in my opinion, uncalled for. It seems to me that it is precisely that kind of attitude which discourages fellow Christians from joining the Christian Heritage Party.

My question to you is whether a Christian organization could ever be of one mind (even the churches in general are divided), whether a so-called neutral political party can show more love to its neighbour than a Christian political party, and whether the work of God's Kingdom does not take place in the CHP?

It is because of fear that Christians do not join (your reason as well) — fear of failure, of intimidation, fear to join with other Christians from different denominations, and a general attitude that you cannot achieve your objective anyway in our pluralistic society.

Is this enough reason? What does it mean when God asks us to serve him with everything we have? Does it mean that we criticize brothers and sisters who believe that by joining CHP we serve our Lord? As far as the advice you gave to the executive of CHP, maybe the shoe fits the other foot. It may be time for you to examine the real reason you are not carrying a CHP membership card.

I hope you are not offended by this letter but will take it from a brother in Christ. Sometimes we need to speak out with conviction, and this letter is not intended to do you any harm. My advice would have been to encourage this member. The membership in our riding is small, but dedicated to serving our Lord in politics. By the way, our members are from several different denominations, including evangelicals and Roman Catholics as well as Reformed.

John Van der Woude, President
Prince George/Bulkley Valley riding
Christian Heritage Party

Dear Ed, John and C.C. Readers:

In next week's issue look for other reactions to this subject, and our response.

Write to: P&M
c/o Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Road
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Tom Zeyl, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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Finance

Understanding rates of return

It is critical to make sure that forescasted rates of return on investments are realistic.

Not so long ago when interest rates were higher, I received a letter from an investment dealer extolling the virtues of Government of Canada bond "strip coupons" for RRSP investment. The letter quoted the availability of the following rates of return on the coupons: Five-year term: 11 percent per annum; 10-year :15 percent per annum; 15-year : 19 percent per annum; and a 20-year term: 24 percent per annum.

The letter said: "The reality of 'compound rates of return' and the fact that your RRSP is non-taxable, means that the above annualized 'simple rates of return' can be earned for your retirement."

Then it explained that "Government of Canada coupons are the 'interest' or 'earnings' portion of certain long-term Government of Canada bonds. They are detachable from the bond and have a specific face value and maturity date. . . . The financial markets price these investments to return a specific annual compound rate of return. It is this pricing mechanism that results in exceptional rates of return."

False advertising?

I was confused. The so-called "exceptional rates of return" were calculated like this: a coupon with a maturity value in 15.33 years of $5,500 was available for an investment of $1,372. Applying the following arithmetic, you arrive at an interesting result.

Subtract the original investment of $1,372 from $5,500 and you are left with $4,128. Divide $4,128 by the $1,372 (purchase price) and multiply by 100. The result is a gross return (total percentage increase) of 300.8 percent. Divide the 300.8 percent by the years to maturity of 15.33 years and the rate of return is 19.62 percent per annum.

A small-print note at the bottom of the letter explains that "rates are calculated on a simple rate basis, not compound, and are attainable when held to maturity."

I found this letter offensive in that it somehow left a prospective investor believing that this alternative for an RRSP would lead to an "exceptional rate of return."

Compound or simple?

The convention that most financial institutions and investment dealers adhere to in quoting long-term rates of return is to quote *compound rates* of return, not simple rates. Using the example above, the coupon purchased now at $1,372 maturing in the year 2003 at $5,500 would have earned 9.47 percent compounded annually. This sounds very different from the 19.62 percent on a simple rate basis.

Compare other examples: using Canadian Real Estate Association figures for housing, a $50,000 house bought in December of 1967 would on average be worth approximately $270,971 today—using simple interest rates, an increase of 18 percent a year. If we used the more accepted compound-rate calcalations the historical rate of appreciation has been just under 7 percent during the last 25 years.

What if we applied the simple rate approach to one of Canada's best known mutual funds? A $50,000 investment over the 15-year period ending December 1991 grew to $528,535. Using the simple rate of return, the Templeton Growth Fund earned a gross return of 957 percent, which when divided by 20 years is 63.8 percent. However, the Templeton organization reports their return over the last 15 years at just over 17 percent compounded annually—a big difference.

The Investment Funds Institute of Canada requires the latter sort of reporting from its members, just as trust companies and banks are required to report their rates of return for GICs and term deposits in a fair manner.

Technically, both ways of reporting returns are correct as long as the basis of calculation is stated. However, selective use of simple rates to imply higher performance than is actually the case is very misleading. Make sure you compare apples to apples!

Leonard Bick is an Ancaster, Ont.-based financial planner.

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to six column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $13.50 per column inch (GST incl.).

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $20.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $20.00 and the couple's correct address.

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Phone: (416) 682-8311
Fax: (416) 682-8313

Births

KONONIUK (nee DYKSTRA):
Helen and Alec thank God for the safe arrival of a son
JACOB SETH
born Nov. 18, 1992.
Proud grandparents are Mrs. Christine Kononiuk of Waterford, Ont., and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence and Sya Dykstra of Beamsville, Ont.
Home address: R.R. #1, Box 29, Robert Dr., Port Elgin, ON N0H 2C0

Anniversaries

1962 December 14 1992

With praise and thanksgiving to our Lord we are happy to announce the 30th anniversary of our parents and grandparents

WARNER and BETSY BOER
(nee BUESINK)

We thank you for your continuing love and support and pray that God may bless you and be near to you in the years to come.
With love from your family.
Harry J. Boer (deceased 1963)
Harry & Faith Boer
Carleen
Jeff & Jayne Boer
Robert Boer
Jonathan Boer & Angela (fiancee)
Home address: 26 Elm St., Simcoe, ON N3Y 3B3

1957 December 11 1992

"I know where you live ..." (Rev. 2: 13a).
It is with joy in our hearts and thankful gratitude to the Lord that we announce the 35th anniversary of our parents,

BERT and DINI HAAR
(nee HARTMAN)

We thank God for the faithfulness that he has shown in those years. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to guide and bless them in the years to come.
Congratulations from their children and grandchildren:
Wilma & Martin DeRuyter — Smithers, B.C.
Melanie, Valerie
Martin & Rose Haar — Smithers, B.C.
Kimberly Foley, Ashley, Christopher
Ed & Deb Haar — Smithers, B.C.
Bert Haar Jr. & Anna Vander Kooij — Houston, B.C.
Marian & Kevin DeBree — Edmonton, Alta.
Home address: P.O. Box 923, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

1967 December 13 1992
Psalm 125

With thanksgiving to God we joyfully announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents,

SID and ANNE VANDER HEIDE
(nee BLOEMBERG)

It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and keep you.
Congratulations and love.
Yvonne — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Ron — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Jill — London, Ont.
Jonathan — London, Ont.
Home address: 2049 Trafalgar St., London, ON N5V 1A4

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Wobbe and Pietje Bylsma (nee Venema) on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary!

1942 December 23 1992

With praise and thanks to God, we are happy to announce our parents' and grandparents' 50th anniversary.

WOBBE and PIETJE BYLSMA
(nee VENEMA)

With love and respect we pray the Lord will continue to bless and keep you in His care.
Your family:
Theresa & Jim Brand
Marsha, Kevin & Karlie, Jamie & Andra, Tracey, Jennifer, Christine
Auke & Chris Bylsma
Karen, Sheila, Adam, Vicky & Jeffrey
Wibbina & Gerald Toonk
Angela, Kimberly, Debrah
John & Ruby Bylsma
Mark, David, Rachael, Elizabeth, Rebekah & Matthew
Anne & Terry Kaastra
Michael, Bryan, Allan, Shaun & Lisa
Cory & John Kuipers
Charleen, Pamela, Jody
Patricia & David Brodie
Joel
An open house will be held on Dec. 23, 1992, D.V., from 2-5 p.m. at the Clinton and District Chr. School, Clinton, Ont.
Home address: R.R. #1, Blyth, ON N0M 1H0

Anniversaries

Moordrecht Brampton
1932 December 28 1992

"Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1: 13).
With praise and thanks to God, we announce the 60th wedding anniversary of our Parents, Grandparents and Great-grandparents,

JORIS and LAURINA VANDERHAM
(nee ROODZANT)

We rejoice in what God has given us through you, and we pray that God's faithful love will continue to surround you for years to come.
With love and congratulations from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:
Alice & John Verkaik — Chatham, Ont.
John & Tasha, Tim & Vivian, Dorothy & Mike, Nina & Chris
John & Shirley Vanderham — Hamilton, Ont.
Lance & Anna, Joanne, Wayne
Peggy & Ron Benoit — Brampton, Ont.
Frank Toirkens — Brampton, Ont.
Lauraine & Maurice, Josh & Robin
Laura & Cliff McNally — Brampton, Ont.
Cora & Meindert Kalverda — Holstein, Ont.
Leona & Rob, Michael, Tanya, Lance
and seven great-grandchildren!
Open house will be held on Saturday, Jan. 9, 1993, D.V., from 2-4 p.m. at Trinity Towers, Holland Chr. Homes, 7900 McLaughlin Road S., Brampton, Ont.
Home address: Hope Towers, Apt. 712, 7900 McLaughlin Road South, Brampton, ON L6V 3N2

Teachers

Agassiz, B.C.: Agassiz Chr. School. The position for principal in a growing rural Christian school of 106 enrolment is open, starting the 1993/94 school year. Applicants must be committed Christians with goal setting and vision skills. Administrative duties will be 40 percent; and classroom duties 60 percent. Closing date for the position is Jan. 31, 1993. Forward all applications to:

Agassiz Christian School,
Box 3230, Agassiz, BC
V0M 1A0
Attn.: Education Committee

Rexdale, Ont.: Timothy Chr. School invites applications for a **temporary full-time teaching position for Grades 2 and 3**, to fill a maternity leave beginning March 22, 1993.
Send letter of application, resume and references to:

George Guichelaar
Timothy Chr. School
28 Elmhurst Dr.
Rexdale, ON M9W 2J5
Phone: (416) 741-5770

Smithers, B.C.: Bulkley Valley Chr. School (K-12, 300 students on 2 campuses) has, for Sept. 1993, **a full-time position in French 4-12.** Please address enquiries/resumes to the **principal, Mr. Evert Vroon, c/o B.V. Christian School, P.O. Box 3635, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0**

Obituaries

The Lord took home two of our members,

MRS. GEERTJE BUSSCHER
and
MRS. NEL VAN SOELEN

We wish both families comfort and strength from the Lord with the loss of their mother.
The members of the Ladies Soc. "Bid en Werk" Maranatha Church, Belleville, Ont.

The residents of the Christian Senior Citizen Home, South Chatham Village wish to express their deepest sympathy to Mrs. Catherina Vandersluys, her children, grand- and great-grandchildren in the passing of,

MR. ADRIAN VANDERSLUYS

on Nov. 23, 1992, at the age of 85 years.
We pray that God will comfort and strengthen Mrs. Vandersluys and her family now and each day in the time to come.
Chatham, Ont., Nov. 23, 1992.

Obituaries

The members of the Golden Age Club and the residents of the Christian Senior Citizen Home, South Chatham Village, wish to express their deepest sympathy to Mrs. Johanna Kruysse, her children, grand- and great-grandchildren in the passing of

MR. FRED KRUYSSE

on Nov. 7, 1992, at the age of 85 years.

We pray that God will comfort and strengthen Mrs. Kruysse and her family now and each day in the time to come.

Chatham, Ont., Nov. 7, 1992.

"I will sing of thy steadfast love, O Lord, for ever; with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations" (Ps. 89: 1).

On Monday, Nov. 23, 1992, the Lord took home our beloved Mother, Grandmother and Great-grandmother,

REINA KUIPERS
(nee KUIPER)

at the age of 89 years.

She was predeceased by her husband of 59 years, Albert Kuipers.

Dear mother of:
John & Nelly Kuipers — Port Perry, Ont.
Diane & Gerry Kuitert — Kingston, Ont.
Henk & Annie Kuipers — Sardis, B.C.
Jack Kuipers — Wellington, Ont.
Geert & Ann Kuipers — Bloomfield, Ont.

Lovingly remembered by:
28 grandchildren and 63 great-grandchildren.

Dear sister of two sisters in the Netherlands.

Funeral service was held on Wednesday, Nov. 25, 1992, in the Bethany Chr. Ref. Church of Bloomfield, Ont. The service was conducted by Rev. H. Salomons.

Correspondence address: Mr. Jack Kuipers, R.R. #1, Wellington, ON K0K 3L0

Personal

Single female, 26, caring, loving, who believes in honesty, commitment, cuddling, who enjoys movies, travelling and quiet evenings. Seeking single man between the ages of 26-30 only, non-smoker, in the Eastern Ontario region for friendship and possible relationship. Photo please. Reply to **File #2599 c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1**

For Rent

Large mobile home at Leesburg on Lake Griffin, Florida. Ten min. walk from city centre, sleeps 6, 2 bedrooms and large kitchen. Available from Dec. 1, 1992, till March 3, 1993. $700 per month. **Phone: (519) 856-4530.**

Obituaries

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). Prepared to meet her heavenly father,

BRECHTJE (BERTHA) BEIMERS
(nee WYBENGA)

was taken to the Lord on Nov. 6, 1992 at the age of 74.

Beloved wife of the late Peter Beimers (1988).

Beloved mother of:
Helina and Wes Baker
Bill and Rose Beimers
Alice and Dennis Dunbar
Frank and Susan Beimers
Pearl and Marian Beimers
Anna Siemon and Don Bernier
John and Bonita Beimers
Carl and Jamie Beimers

Dearly loved grandmother to 20 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Survived by one sister, Hiltje van der Werf of Franeker, the Netherlands.

Predeceased by one grandson, one brother and one sister.

The funeral service was held at the Westmount Christian Reformed Church in Strathroy, Ont. at 2:30 p.m. on November 9, 1992.

Correspondence address: Helina Baker, 478 Metcalfe St. W., Strathroy, ON, N7G 1N8.

God as'k sa iensum, iensum bin,
en nea ta resten komme kin,
is't oft Jo stimme tsijn mij seit,
"Mijn bern, kom ta dijn Himelheit."

1906 1992

"Jesus said ... 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me ... will never die' " (John 11: 25, 26).

On Saturday, Nov. 28, 1992, at Alliston Hospital, surrounded by his wife, children and grandchildren,

PIETER SCHENSEMA

peacefully entered the presence of the Lord.

Beloved husband of Martha (Volmer).

Dear Father of:
Margaretha — New York, N.Y.
Willem & Heleen — Chicago, Ill.
Ralph & Joanne — Oakville
Pieter & Doreen — Toronto
Marijke & Raymond Bennell — Beeton
Ben & Renate — Three Hills, Alta.
Martin & Nancy — Parry Sound

20 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Dear brother of:
Carel & Adrie of the Netherlands
Wetie & Herman Schmidtz of Peterborough

Predeceased by:
Wynand, Marinus, Willem, Sophia and Dirk.

Funeral service was held at Alliston Chr. Ref. Church, on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 1992.

Correspondence address: 17 Eastern Ave., Tottenham, ON L0G 1W0

Obituaries

Breukelen, the Neth. Belleville, Ont.
1910 1992

Ik zie een poort wijd open staan.
Waardoor het licht komt stromen.
Van 't kruis waar ik vrijlijk heen mag gaan.
Om vrede te bekomen.
Genade Gods zo rijk en vrij,
Die poort staat open ook voor mij.

At Belleville General Hospital, on Nov. 18, 1992, God took unto himself our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother,

PIETERNELLA JOHANNA VAN SOELEN
(nee SMIT)

She was predeceased by an infant son in 1943 and her husband Willem in 1973.

She is survived by:
Gil & Jane Van Soelen — Georgetown, Ont.
Wynand & Shiela Van Soelen — Bloomfield, Ont.
Ike & Irene Van Soelen — Guelph, Ont.
Bill & Marguerite Van Soelen — Belleville, Ont.

Ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth, blessed indeed ... that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!" (Rev. 14: 13).

To God be the glory!

Born, July 22, 1914, Gerkesklooster-Stroobosch, Friesland, the Netherlands,

CLAIRE (KLASKE) VRIEND

passed away peacefully in the Lord on Nov. 15, 1992, in Vancouver, B.C.

Survived and missed by:
Her husband Peter — Houston, B.C.
Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchild:
Norman & Arlene Vriend — Houston, B.C.
Wesley, Byron, Winona, Gregory, Brent
Harry & Norma Vriend — Leduc, Alta.
Karen, Karl, David, Daniel
John & Ada Vriend — St. Catharines, Ont.
Kathy & Rick (Zachary), Chris
Jerry & Catherine Vriend — Winnipeg, Man.
Philip, Laura
Joann G. Vriend — Dawson City, Yukon
Olinda E. Vriend — Vancouver, B.C.
Dorothy L. Vriend — Oakland, Calif.

Claire is also survived by two brothers and two sisters with their families and one sister-in-law residing in the Netherlands.

Neither life nor death shall ever,
From the Lord His children sever,
For to them His grace revealing,
He turns sorrow into healing.

Correspondence address: P.D. Vriend, Box 76, Houston, BC V0J 1Z0

Employment wanted

Landed immigrant with a diploma in **general agriculture** and a university degree in **agricultural economics** seeks employment in Southern Ontario. **Please contact Assefa at (416) 562-7478.**

Help Wanted

Family Christian Bookstore in Burlington needs **one part-time person for 3 days a week.** Hours include one evening and every other Saturday.

Requirements include a pleasant personality, willingness to work hard, eagerness to learn and a love for good books.

Apply to store manager: Mrs. Ina Klassens or to owner Ed Gringhuis. Tel. (416) 637-9151.

EDMONTON SOCIETY FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

BUSINESS MANAGER

(May 1, 1993)

Our present business manager is retiring and we are seeking a person to fill this position, which reports directly to the school superintendent.

Ideally, this person will possess an appropriate Accounting and Business degree (or equivalent combination of education and experience) and have a thorough understanding of Christian education from a Reformed perspective.

The person selected will be one
- who is a self-starter with good organizational talent.
- who possesses excellent interpersonal skills, oral and written communication ability.
- who is an experienced administrator with budgeting and financial planning skills, and knowledge of computer technology in the financial area.
- who is able to give motivational leadership to a small clerical group as well as to the wider sphere of volunteer activity, especially in the fund-raising area.

If this position attracts you, please send letter of enquiry and resume to:

Dr. Wilco Vanden Born, Board chairperson
5711-139 Avenue, NW
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T5A 1E8

before January 19, 1993.

Christian Courier

has adopted
six objectives which represent our continuing philosophy

This week we publish Objective 5:

"Honest Journalism"

"Commit ourselves to thorough, accurate and fair reporting about things that make a difference rather than about things that merely are different."

Help Wanted

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

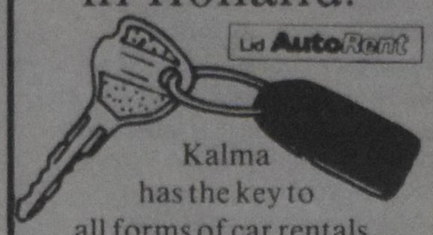
The **Calgary Christian School**, a school providing education from a Christian point of view to 500+ students in Kindergarten to Grade 12, is looking for a **Development Director** to work full-time to promote the development of the school resulting in growth of the student body and in financial resources.

This new position will require a person committed to Christian day school education, with experience and proven results in public relations and marketing. The successful candidate will have excellent oral and written communication skills together with interpersonal effectiveness and a proactive style. Preferably, he or she will possess post-secondary education. Financial and/or fund raising skills would be an asset. As a team player, this person will have demonstrated creativity and a positive optimistic disposition.

Please send resumes to:
Paul Verhoeff
Development Director Recruitment Committee
Calgary Christian School
2839 - 49 Street SW
Calgary, AB
T3E 3X9

Miscellaneous

Want to rent a car while in Holland?



Kalma has the key to all forms of car rentals.
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Miscellaneous

BIBLE CURRICULUM PROJECT

The Canadian Curriculum Council has approved a project to write two ***Teacher Guides*** for a high-school Bible program, one in Old Testament studies, one in New Testament studies.

The **Teacher Guides** will:
- follow an approved content outline;
- provide for an inductive study of the Bible itself;
- include the use of a range of student resources;
- provide student handouts;
- develop a variety of learning strategies for various learning styles.

Timeline: A contract will be signed in February. The project is expected to take the equivalent of one-half year full-time and is to be completed during the 1993-1994 school year.

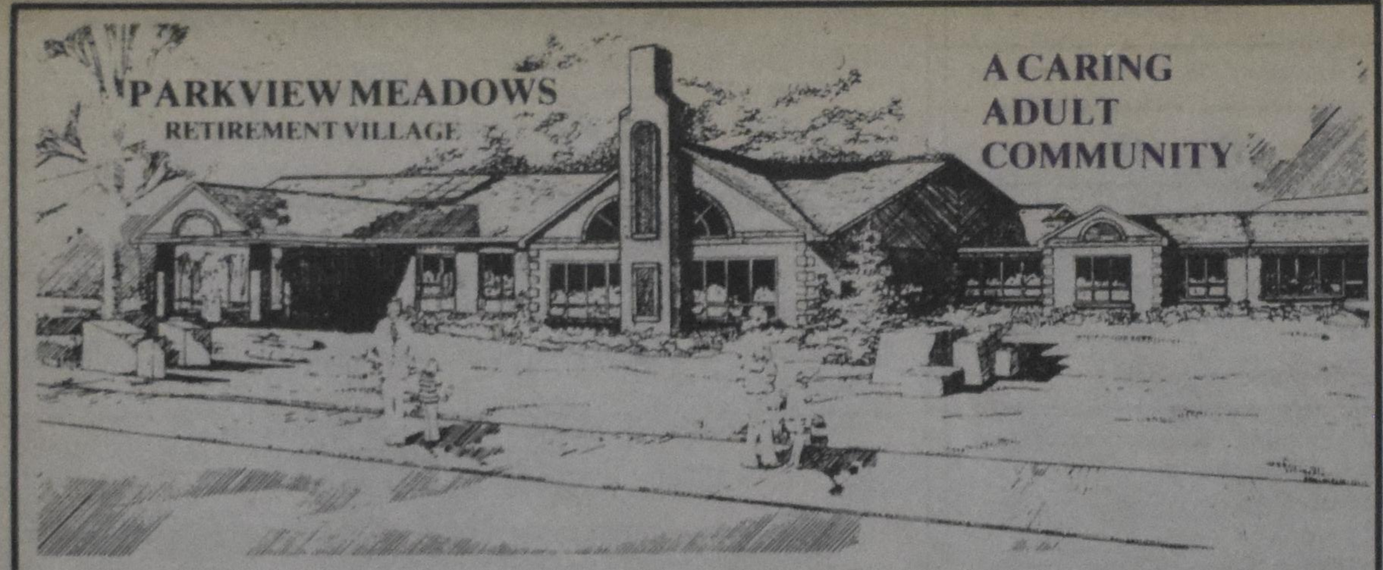
Remuneration: This will depend on the writer's qualifications.

We invite applications from interested teachers and writers. Deadline for applications: **January 29, 1993.**

For further details, please contact:
Project Director
Herman Proper
Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
777 Hwy. #53 East
P.O. Box 7220
Ancaster ON
L9G 3L4
Phone: (416) 648-2100 Fax: (416) 648-2110

Contingent on availability of funding from the Canadian Curriculum Education Foundation.

For Rent



We invite all seniors, including those on waiting lists with other retirement facilities, to give consideration to our new non-profit facility.

Come and see
Brookview... Life Lease Apartments
Southview... Retirement Suites with services provided by Christian Staff
Parkview... A beautiful place for you with recreational and social facilities and an elegant dining room.

All this in a community of Christian Seniors which is located in close proximity to three welcoming Christian Reformed churches in **Hagersville, Jarvis** and **Simcoe**.

A Christian non-profit community developed and operated by Nanticoke Christian Senior Citizen Home Inc.

Call Ann DeVries and arrange a visit: (519) 587-2447
72 Town Centre Dr.
Townsend, ON
N0A 1S0

Teachers

Timothy Christian School
has a definite

Principal

opening for the 1993-94 school year.

Our school of 130 students and nine staff was established in 1958 and is situated in a northwest suburb of Metropolitan Toronto known as Rexdale. If you are interested in leading a dedicated staff and being supported by a committed Christian school community, we invite you to apply for this position. We look forward to assisting you to use your talents and gifts in our school to help prepare God's children for service in His kingdom. Please send resumes or direct enquiries to:

William Groot (416-743-2554 — evenings)
Principal Search Committee
Timothy Christian School
28 Elmhurst Drive
Rexdale ON M9W 2J5

Classifieds/Events

Events

Calendar

Dec. 11 Advent celebration with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir" (Dir. John Hunse), at 8 p.m., CRC, Fruitland, Ont.

Dec. 11 Handel's "Messiah" presented by the Georgetown Choral Society, 8 p.m., Holland Chr. Homes, Brampton, Ont. Info. 1-800-387-9974.

Dec. 12 Official opening of Shalom Manor Nursing Home, 1:30 p.m., Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont.

Dec. 12 Handel's "Messiah" presented by the Georgetown Choral Society, 8 p.m., Elizabeth Seton Roman Catholic Church, Newmarket, Ont. Info.: 1-800-387-9974.

Dec. 12 Christmas choir and organ concert, with guest organist Andre Knevel, at 7:30 p.m., Centennial United Church, 858 Dundas St., London, Ont.

Dec. 12 "An English Christmas" presented by the Listowel Concert Singers with brassroots and organ. At 8 p.m., Trinity United Church, Listowel, Ont.

Dec. 13 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J. Kuntz, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.

Dec. 13 Handel's "Messiah" presented by "The Laudate Dominum Choir" (director Barbara Mavin) and organist Dick DeJonge. At 8 p.m., St. Paul's Congregational Church, Chatham, Ont.

Dec. 13 Annual candlelight carol service, 7:30 p.m., Central Presb. Church, Hamilton, Ont. Choir and soloists are joined by brass players from the Hamilton Philharmonic. Admission free.

Dec. 18 Handel's "Messiah" presented by the Georgetown Choral Society, 8 p.m., Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church, Georgetown, Ont. Info.: 1-800-387-9974.

Dec. 18 - 20 Annual candlelight services of the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir (dir. John Hunse). Dec. 18: 8 p.m., Mount Hamilton CRC, Hamilton, Ont. Dec. 20: 7:30 p.m., CRC, York, Ont.

Dec. 19 Christmas concert by the O.C.M.A. (Leendert Kooy directing), with organist Andre Knevel, 8 p.m., Willowdale United Church, Willowdale, Ont. For info./tickets call: (416) 636-9779.

Dec. 19 Christmas sing-a-long, 7:30 p.m., Central United Church, St. Thomas, Ont. With the (combined) St. Thomas Ladies' Choir, Male Choir and Strathroy Mixed Choir.

Dec. 19 The Georgetown Choral Society performs Handel's "Messiah" at a benefit concert for Redeemer College. At 8 p.m., Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Info.: 1-800-387-9974.

Dec. 23 Christmas concert by the O.C.M.A. (Leendert Kooy directing), with organist Andre Knevel, 8 p.m., Rehoboth CRC, Bowmanville, Ont. For info./tickets call: (416) 636-9779.

For Sale

BIRTHDAY/ANNIVERSARY REMINDER CALENDAR!

Perfect for gift giving.

Traditional with families of Dutch heritage. This calendar is hung in the bathroom, where time is put to creative use. Your whole year becomes a year of celebration with all important dates remembered.

Each month displays a word of encouragement from the HOLY BIBLE.

Individual calendar orders = **$9.45** each.
10% discount when ordering 10 or more = **$8.50** each.
Price includes envelope. Add 7% GST & 8% PST.

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Grapevine Advertising,
429 N. Brodie Street, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 3T4.
Phone or Fax: 1-807-623-1079.

ASSISTANT PASTOR FOR YOUTH & SINGLES

is needed to provide leadership in pastoral care and program ministries. Some involvement in worship and preaching. Ordination and experience preferred. Half-time position. Please send resume/request for information to **Willowdale Christian Reformed Church, Attention Mr. Daniel L. Carter, 70 Hilda Avenue, Willowdale, ON M2M 1V5**

Time for a change?

God transforms lives at **Reformed Bible College** (a university outside of Canada)! Classes begin in September & January & May. Days/evenings, full-time/part-time, correspondence courses.

Call Dr. Dorothy Hostetter (616) 363-2050.

Help Wanted

← Miscellaneous

For Rent →

Low Car Rentals in Holland

We have all kinds of cars and campers from Fl. 180 per week exclusive of tax.

H. Dunnewind
Haven Oost 18 7731 GT Ommen (OV), the Neth.
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Fax: 011-31-5291-51927

Teachers

Christian Courier

Please start the following (gift) subscription today at

$25.00!

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Send to: **Christian Courier**
261 Martindale Rd., Unit 4, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1

This offer applies only to those who were never subscribers of Calvinist Contact or whose subscription lapsed more than a year ago.
(Valid until December 31, 1992)

Clinton and District Chr. School will have an opening for

PRINCIPAL

starting the 1993/94 school year. Clinton is located approximately 75 km. north of London, 18 km. east of the sandy Lake Huron beaches and only a short 45-minute drive from the famous Stratford Festival.

Our ten-room school with full-size gymnasium, has 218 students at the moment with a staff of nine full-time and two part-time teachers.

If you are interested, please send your application with complete resume to the Search Committee

c/o Mr. Ralph Schuurman, Principal
P.O. Box 658,
Clinton, ON N0M 1L0
Tel.: (519) 482-7851

The Flavour of Multinationals

I. Mexico
Parable of Del Monte
Grow tomatoes
the big company said
but when the crop was ripe
there was no market
for tomatoes
So the big company moved
in and took the tomatoes
off their hands for next
to nothing.

II. Africa
The Cane Fields
Even the chief agreed
that the women
should be allowed
some of the land
of their husbands
for producing food
for the families
Even the men agreed
that perhaps the women
could have some of
the cheque from the company
that grew cane
on their land
The company bypassed
the agreement
of the chief
The yellow machines
bulldozed lifestyles
and livelihoods
the next day
regardless
of agreements

III. Cocoa
People who have grown
cocoa all their lives
but never tasted
chocolate:
"If the whole world
likes chocolate
why are we so poor?"

IV. The Philippines
Pineapple Plantation
This was my farm
he said
I grew crops here
supported my family
until Dole wanted
my land
I could sell now
or be harrassed
until I sold later
only that choice

V. Oh Canada
Why are there no longer
four canneries
in the Niagara Peninsula?
Why does McCain choose
for some Canadians
where, how and with what
they buy their seed
or purchase their machinery?
Why do Cargill's
massive elevators
take such a chunk
out of the skyline
of western towns?
Is Beatrice
in your refrigerator?

Alberta Christian farmers focus on people, food, environment

Photo: C.C. files

Coffee, a 1935 mural by Brazillian artist Cândide Portinari.

Linda Siebenga

EDMONTON — The Alberta Christian Farmers Federation (CFF) is moving toward an approach to membership which includes more urban people and which makes more connections between consumers and food producers. That new emphasis was obvious at the CFF's recent convention (Nov. 12-13) in Edmonton where a proposal was adopted which will change the organization's name to Earthkeeping, Food and Agriculture in a Christian Perspective. The overall convention theme was "Keeping the Farm, Keeping the City, Keeping the Faith."

Two internationally acclaimed speakers, David Mensah and Loren Wilkinson, challenged members' perceptions of local and global food production, as did workshops such as "Shopping for Justice" and "Agricultural Cooperatives in Mexico," and videos on international farming scenarios.

David Mensah is from Ghana and has a PhD in land use and environmental studies. He encouraged conventioneers to nurture person-to-person relationships instead of person-to-thing relationships.

Overcoming consumer mentality

The driving force in northern countries to "get plenty" creates insurmountable problems for the rest of the world, Mensah said. In our quest for more, we rashly turn to multinationals which provide what we want at a great cost to the creation and its people, Mensah continued. We no longer recognize the land/food connection. He asked, "When will we realize that we can't cook computers and eat them?"

A workshop on supermarket shopping by Greg Brandenbarg, a CFF staff person, reinforced Mensah's ideas: "Think globally. Buy locally." If each country were to feed its own people *before* exporting crops for cash, there would be fewer hungry people, Brandenbarg asserted.

Creative challenge

Loren Wilkenson, a philosophy professor at Regent College in Vancouver and a part-time farmer who has contributed to the international debate on the environment from a Christian and agricultural perspective, spoke in the same vein. Buying locally would put creative demands on local food growers, who would then be challenged to become more diverse, he said.

Gerald Debbink led a workshop on Mexican cooperatives, drawing on his and his family's working in Mexico for several years. That workshop and videos on international farming knit the convention together with pictures of brothers and sisters who share this planet with us, many attendees felt.

The poems on this page express ideas from the speakers, workshops and videos which Linda Siebenga says "nudged my conscience and will continue to make me look at my choices with a view to whether they are made with care for others or with only the profit principle in mind."

Bananas

With a flail of the tail
multinationals
could sweep even Canada
into their dustbin
of progress

yet we trundle
unaware
through supermarkets
supporting their
rapacious behaviour
to pleasure our palates

Bananas
for a song
twenty-nine cents
a pound at Superstore

Ten dollars a pound
a just price

Ten dollars to rattle
my wallet
into thought

for the thousand miles
of transportation costs
that must come from somewhere

for the families
coerced off their land
with no place
to grow food
for their children

Bananas
are
a perishable
commodity

a cheap deal
can be struck
at the last moment.

Photo: C.C. files

Each red coffee berry contains two beans.